United Nations S/PV.7867

Security Council

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20 January 2017

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Official communiqué of the 7867th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 20 January 2017, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 20 January 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7867th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

"The President invited Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Ladsous."

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United Nations S/PV.7868

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7868th meeting
Friday, 20 January 2017, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-01567 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1072, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf:

"The Security Council takes note of the report (S/2016/1072) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and welcomes the briefing on 13 January 2017 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas).

"The Security Council welcomes the letter of the President of the Security Council dated 29 December 2016 and its annex concerning the extension of the mandate of the UNOWAS for a further period of three years, from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019.

"The Security Council expresses its full support to the Special Representative and looks forward to efforts to enhance ongoing activities undertaken by UNOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and good offices, subregional and regional cooperation to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security, the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as well as the promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, and gender mainstreaming.

"The Security Council welcomes the recent positive political developments in several West African countries, in particular the holding of free and peaceful elections in Cape Verde and Ghana, and the outcome of the political dialogue in Guinea. The Security Council welcomes the steps taken to develop and institute political, institutional and constitutional reforms in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

"The Security Council takes note of the steps taken by the United Nations system, in partnership with the authorities of Burkina Faso, to pilot a new approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in the country, including the development of a strategic framework to help consolidate stability in the post-transition period. The Security Council encourages UNOWAS to support peacebuilding and sustain peace efforts in other countries in West Africa where democratic gains remain fragile, following the comprehensive United Nations inter-agency approach in Burkina Faso.

"The Security Council welcomes the ongoing work of UNOWAS to promote women's participation in political, peace and security processes and, in this regard, welcomes positive developments in Liberia and Nigeria.

"The Security Council recalls press statement SC/12616, presidential statement S/PRST/2016/19 and resolution 2337 (2017) and welcomes and is encouraged by the decision on the political situation in The Gambia of the fiftieth ordinary session of the Economic Community of West African States Authority, held in Abuja on 17 December 2016, and welcomes the decisions of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council at its six hundred and forty-fourth meeting, held on 12 December 2016, as well as its declaration at its six hundred and forty-seventh meeting, held on 13 January 2017, that, as of 19 January 2017, outgoing President Yahya Jammeh will cease to be recognized by the AU as the legitimate President of the Republic of The Gambia. In this regard, the Security Council requests the Special Representative, through his good offices, to continue facilitating interactions and negotiations aimed at ensuring a peaceful transfer of power from outgoing President Yahya Jammeh to President Adama Barrow.

"The Security Council expresses its concerns over the prevalence of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and terrorist threats in the region and their linkages to transnational organized crime. In this regard, the Security Council strongly

condemns all terrorist attacks carried out in the region, in particular in the Lake Chad basin region, notably by Boko Haram. The Security Council stresses the need to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including by addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. The Security Council expresses particular concern about attacks on civilians, who are the primary victims of this terrorist violence.

"The Security Council welcomes the subregional, regional and international efforts to mitigate the security, humanitarian and development consequences of Boko Haram's operations. The Security Council takes note of the progress made in the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The Security Council urges the member States participating in the MNJTF to further enhance regional military cooperation and coordination, deny haven to Boko Haram and secure the conditions to enable humanitarian access and facilitate the restoration of civilian security and the rule of law in liberated areas. The Security Council reaffirms that Member States must ensure that any measures taken to counter terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law.

"The Security Council encourages Member States and multilateral partners to lend their support to the MNJTF to ensure its full operationalization, including the provision of modalities to increase the timely and effective exchange of intelligence to further the region's collective efforts to combat Boko Haram, whenever possible and appropriate. The Security Council underscores the importance of a holistic approach to degrade and defeat Boko Haram that includes coordinated security operations, conducted in accordance with applicable international law, as well as enhanced civilian efforts to improve governance and promote economic growth in the affected areas. In this regard, the Security Council deeply regrets the tragic incident in Rann, north-east Nigeria, on 17 January 2017, which resulted in the deaths of numerous civilians, including internally displaced persons and humanitarian workers. The Security Council urges the Government of Nigeria to swiftly investigate the incident and recalls the obligation of all parties to armed conflict to comply strictly with the obligations applicable to them under international humanitarian, human right and refugee law.

"The Security Council reiterates deep concern over the dire humanitarian situation caused by the activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin region. In this regard, the Security Council calls on the international community to immediately support the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance for the people most affected by the crisis in Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, including by fulfilling the United Nations appeal for the Lake Chad basin region. It also urges national Governments to facilitate access for humanitarian organizations and to work with the United Nations and international partners to develop viable options for delivering aid.

"The Security Council expresses continued concern about piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the trafficking of drugs and other illicit goods, the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking and stresses the need to strengthen the fight against illicit activities in the subregion.

"The Security Council welcomes the leadership demonstrated by countries in West Africa and the Sahel in spearheading initiatives to address security challenges in the region and encourages further collaboration between Member States, regional and subregional organizations, relevant United Nations entities and with other relevant stakeholders to enhance social cohesion and to address challenges to good governance.

"The Security Council commends the engagement of UNOWAS with subregional and regional organizations, in particular, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union, in order to promote peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel. The Security Council remains committed to working closely with these organizations through UNOWAS to strengthen subregional and regional cooperation to address cross-border security threats and prevent the spread of terrorism. In that respect, they welcome the assistance of UNOWAS to the efforts of the ECOWAS Commission to implement its Regional Framework for Security Sector Reform

and Governance and to promote a coordinated security sector reform approach in the region.

"The Security Council notes the collaboration undertaken between UNOWAS and the Peacebuilding Commission and encourages continued close and effective cooperation in support of sustainable peace in the region.

"The Security Council commends the efforts of the African Union and ECOWAS, as well as of Member States in West Africa and the Sahel, to strengthen border security and regional cooperation, including through the G-5 Sahel and the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

"The Security Council encourages further progress by the United Nations system and its partners towards the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, including through support to the Group of 5 for the Sahel, in order to assist in addressing the security and political challenges to the stability and development of the Sahel region, and reaffirms its continued commitment to address such challenges, which are interrelated with humanitarian and development issues, as well as the adverse effects of climate and ecological changes, and, in this regard, highlights the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies relating to climate change impacts.

"The Security Council welcomes the conclusion of the independent evaluation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. In that regard, the Security Council requests UNOWAS to coordinate with States in the Sahel and all other stakeholders to provide strategic leadership, guidance and direction to the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the Strategy, including its thematic focus, coordination arrangements, partnerships and distribution of responsibilities among United Nations entities in the field and at Headquarters.

"The Security Council requests UNOWAS to contribute to efforts aimed at sustaining international engagement by re-energizing the commitments and initiatives of all the relevant stakeholders, including countries of the region, the various regional mechanisms, the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and emphasizes, in that regard, the importance of the convening role of the Peacebuilding Commission in peacebuilding efforts, and thus, in collaboration with UNOWAS, in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing the implementation of the Strategy, in collaboration with UNOWAS, and to adapting the Strategy to the evolving needs of the region.

"The Security Council further requests UNOWAS to provide the necessary support to the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and its Technical Secretariat, as well as to the G-5 Sahel.

"The Security Council expresses its intention to periodically monitor progress made, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to provide, in the upcoming regular report due in July 2017, information on UNOWAS efforts with respect to the following aspects of its United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel-related mandate: a) coherence in the political and programmatic aspects of the Strategy; b) streamlining and coordination of initiatives by international and regional actors in the Sahel region, with a view to ensuring that they meet the emerging challenges in the region; c) guidance and leadership of the overall engagement of the United Nations system and partners with a view to serving the overall objective of the Strategy; d) advancing the implementation of the nine flagship projects of the Strategy and the assessment of their impact; and e) ensuring attention to all Strategy pillars, and funding gaps."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2017/2.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7869

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7869th meeting
Thursday, 26 January 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2017/20)

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17-02069 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2017/20)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/70, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/20, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I should like to inform the Council that the presidency of the Council has met with the representatives of the parties, who have presented their positions vis-à-vis the item on the Council's agenda. On the basis of those meetings, with the consent of the members of the Council, the presidency has drawn the conclusion that the Council can proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution before it.

If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2338 (2017).

The meeting rose at 10.05 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7870

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7870th meeting

Thursday, 26 January 2017, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/58)

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17-02075 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/58)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Amir Mahmoud Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme; and Mr. Peter Salama, Executive Director of the World Health Organization Emergencies Programme.

Mr. Salama is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Geneva.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/58, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016).

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

We met to discuss the implementation of resolution 2336 (2016) and the Astana meeting last week. We look forward to taking stock, post-Astana, and discussing the important upcoming United Nations-led Geneva talks with Special Envoy de Mistura next week. Therefore, today we focus on the humanitarian situation in order to try to give it the due attention it deserves.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: We witnessed devastation and suffering in Syria in 2016 at levels that defy comprehension. We witnessed people dying of starvation, with the pictures of emaciated, starving children from the besieged town of Madaya staining our conscience. There were the constant, harrowing images of bombs and mortars raining down on schools, medical facilities, internally displaced settlements, public markets and critical water networks. We saw a shocked, blank stare from five-year-old Omran Daqneesh, his silent face covered in blood and dust after being pulled from the rubble caused by an air strike in eastern Aleppo. We are still horrified by reports of rescue and medical workers teams, Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers and humanitarian personnel attacked while on duty. We witnessed the destruction in Darayya, dubbed "Syria's capital of barrel bombs", and the relentless demolition of eastern Aleppo. We saw towns besieged, bombed and then emptied. We saw buses, intended to evacuate civilians, burning outside of Fo'ah.

We have seen the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) recapture the ancient city of Palmyra. And we have watched as these actions brought with them an atrocious, incalculable human toll. The Secretary-General, myself and my colleagues have called the situation a slaughterhouse, a complete meltdown of humanity, the apex of horror. There is no pretending; that is what daily life was like for millions of civilians across Syria throughout 2016 — so much suffering in just 12 months, and all of it under our collective watch.

And yet, as we start 2017, and as hard as it is to imagine, there are some emerging reasons to hope. Since 30 December, a nationwide ceasefire continues to hold, despite some breaches. That has provided a rare moment of respite for many, and we must all do everything in our power to see that it is consolidated and extended. I have also just returned from Helsinki, where the world came together to support Syrians and the region. Even with continuing dire humanitarian needs, I took away a sense of hope from my meetings in Finland, none more so than in the steady determination of Syrian non-governmental organizations, with whom I had the honour to sit alongside as we discussed the humanitarian priorities for the coming year. Together with the European Union, the United Nations will host a conference on Syria in the beginning of April. That will be an opportunity for the international community to reiterate and pledge their commitment to support the Syrian people.

I also take hope in recent developments on the political track. This week we saw those who, despite years of fighting, were willing to set the past aside to sit alongside one another in Astana. The agreement by Russia, Turkey and Iran in Astana to establish a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire is a welcome development. Saving Syrian lives is the shared priority of all of us, and the United Nations stands ready to assist in the

establishment of this mechanism. It is also our hope that further consolidation of the ceasefire will help to create a supportive environment for the resumption of intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva, under the auspices and lead of the United Nations, as per relevant Security Council resolutions. Special Envoy de Mistura has just attended the Astana meeting and he will brief the Council, as the President mentioned, more fully on the political track, on 31 January.

As we move towards United Nations talks, the collective hopes of the world are for a political solution based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). There is no other solution, neither humanitarian nor, indeed, military — however emboldened some parties may feel following the full evacuation of eastern Aleppo. We all owe it to the people of Syria, who have suffered so much, to do everything in our power to see the political process succeed and to see their hope restored.

Sadly, in recent months, we have too often been unable to translate hope into humanitarian action. From the formation of the Task Force on Humanitarian Access, as part of the International Syria Support Group in early 2016, up until September last year, we saw unprecedented access to those most in need in Syria. By September of last year, over one and a quarter million people were reached via inter-agency convoys to besieged and hard-to-reach areas, compared to just 487,000 in all of 2015. Such access was not easily achieved, but took the hard work of the United Nations team in Damascus and in Geneva, with the support of influential Member States — especially the Russian Federation and the United States. Frustratingly, and with dire humanitarian consequences, significant challenges with cross-line access have re-emerged. Sadly, access has currently returned to the levels we saw before the humanitarian task force came into effect.

That diminution in access is, in part, because the two-step approval process agreed by the Syrian authorities has become, in practice, a ten-step process. Despite high rates of in-principle approvals, only one or two approved convoys have reached their destinations in each of the last three months. In December, one — just one — inter-agency convoy delivered assistance to 6,000 people out of a total of 930,250 people requested under the December inter-agency convoy plan. This is less than 1 per cent of what we aimed to achieve, and even in this one instance when we could deliver, over 23,000 medical items were removed from the United Nations inter-agency convoy. So far, in January the situation is not much better, with only one inter-agency convoy deployed to Moadamiya, on 7 January, reaching 40,000 people; however, this was a location that we had requested under last November's plan.

In both December and January, the Syrian Government did respond within the agreed seven working days to our monthly inter-agency convoy plans, but subsequent administrative delays on the part of the Government — including in the approval of facilitation letters, approval by local governors and security committees, as well as broader restrictions on the part of all parties — continue to hamper our efforts and deprive the most vulnerable civilians of much-needed assistance.

Let me be perfectly clear. We have a humanitarian task force whose sole purpose is to ensure access, and since 30 December we have had a ceasefire that has improved security in many areas. And yet, despite these two positive factors, we continue to be blocked at every turn by lack of approvals at the central and local levels, disagreements on access routes, and the violation of agreed procedures at checkpoints by parties to the conflict. Are these important? Yes. We cannot "just plough on" or "just get on with it", as I have heard one member sitting around this say table to me, because if one brave aid worker drives through the check point without these facilitation letters and the command is then transmitted down the line, the checkpoint guard or their sniper takes the shot.

On 11 January, the United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in Damascus sent a note verbale to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a list of practical suggestions to speed up access, simplify procedures and get convoys moving. No response has yet been received. We have the capacity to deliver to hundreds of thousands of people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas every month, and we are ready to move should access be allowed by the parties to the conflict. We call on all Council members with influence over the Syrian authorities and on members of the humanitarian task force to do more to ensure the support of the Syrian Government to deliver life-saving assistance through the existing structures and mechanisms. I say without, I hope, being seen as defensive, that the fault is not at the door of the United Nations or the non-governmental organizations (NGOs); it is the Syrian Government and the local governors who are responsible. I would ask Council

members to direct their irritation and influence at them. We need to be allowed to pass — not as a favour but as a right — and safely.

On the ground, despite enormous challenges, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Syria continue to deliver life-saving assistance and support to millions of people across the country every month. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) — which the Council will hear more from in a few minutes — reached over 4 million people with food commodities in December alone. The World Health Organization, which the Council will also hear from this morning, along with UNICEF, implemented their accelerated routine immunization campaign in northern Syria, vaccinating some 104,000 children in Jarablus and other parts of Aleppo governorate. Over the course of 2016, over 4 million non-food items were distributed across Syria, nutrition items were provided to some 3 million, and shelter was provided to nearly 300,000 people.

Moreover, the vital humanitarian cross-border activities continued to represent a crucial element of the United Nations response. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 467 cross-border convoys, or nearly four a week on average. This has allowed United Nations partners to deliver medical supplies sufficient for 9 million treatments, including for 2 million people to be vaccinated. Some 3 million have been fed, many on a monthly basis. Assistance has been delivered to various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Lattakia and Hama governorates in Turkey, and Dar'a and Quneitra governorates in Jordan. These operations complement the critical role played by international and Syrian NGOs, which provide assistance and services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

In addition, the United Nations has completed 294 airlifts to Qamishly, delivering 10,000 metric tons of food; water, sanitation and hygiene products; and nutrition, education, shelter and non-food assistance on behalf of humanitarian actors, including 120,000 full food rations. I will leave the WFP Deputy Executive Director to provide more context and reports on our United Nations airlift and air drops capacity, and activity, particularly at Hasaka and Deir ez-Zor.

I pay a complete tribute to all the extraordinary steadfast and unflinchingly courageous aid workers — those from NGOs, Syrian, regional and international; those working cross-border from both Jordan and Turkey, as well as those within Syria; those across the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and my colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); those with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and the local communities and families that have set aside so much to help others. They can rest assured that their actions have saved many lives of their fellow Syrian and global citizens, protecting them wherever possible and never desisting, despite relentless setbacks, threats and danger. And, if I may, let me pause to take a moment to honour all those humanitarian aid workers who have been killed in their duties.

As was noted last month, with the evacuation of eastern Aleppo the number of those besieged in Syria was reduced. Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that as of January some 643,780 people are living in 13 areas under siege. Three locations were removed from the previous list of 16 locations, where some 974,080 people were unable to move freely. The eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo were removed following their full take-over by the Government of Syria in December. Madimayet Elsham in rural Damascus was delisted due to the significant improvement in humanitarian access and freedom of movement over the past three months following the signing and subsequent implementation of a local agreement. Hajar al-Aswad, in rural Damascus, was also removed due to the access that has been available through Yarmouk, Yelda and Al-Qadam.

Further, population figures have been adjusted for other locations based on the latest and most accurate information received from the ground. This includes a reduction of 1,200 people for Fo'ah and Kafraya, in Idlib, following their evacuation from the two towns in December. Adjustments were also made for areas in the eastern Ghoutah enclave due to movements within the enclave, as well as for Zabadani and Khan al-Shih.

The reduction in numbers, however, should not be mistaken for progress in addressing the scourge of besiegement. Parties continue to use siege as a weapon of war, and in each of these cases we saw protracted periods of restricted aid, as well heavy fighting and bombing, as a precursor to the agreements that brought the areas back under Government of Syria control. I

continue to call for an immediate end to all besiegement by all parties in this conflict. The act of besiegement does nothing other than to punish civilians, who already bear the brunt of this terrible conflict.

Let me provide the Council with an update on four locations in Syria where humanitarian action remains greatly needed and, sadly, often contested: Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, rural Damascus and Raqqa. I shall address each of these in turn.

First, in Aleppo, humanitarian needs continue to be staggering. Since 24 November, nearly 160,000 people have been at least temporarily displaced from formerly besieged neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo. This includes over 120,000 people displaced to Government-controlled areas in and around Aleppo city or having stayed in eastern Aleppo, and over 36,000 people evacuated to non-State armed group-controlled Idlib and rural western Aleppo. The humanitarian situation for many of those who have been displaced or have stayed has been difficult, and the cold winter has exacerbated the situation further. Following the cut-off of running water to the some 1.8 million in Aleppo due to a technical problem — as we understand it — whose solution lies in ISIL-controlled territory outside of the city, the humanitarian situation has become even more difficult.

Last month, OCHA provided Council members with a detailed overview of our response to those 36,000 people who evacuated into rural western Aleppo and Idlib. Those 36,000 people were provided with immediate life-saving assistance that is now part of the regular cross-border humanitarian programming that assists some 900,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Idlib, as well as elsewhere in the north.

I will now brief the Council on the United Nations response in each of the main areas in which those affected by the Aleppo crisis have been displaced or returned to across the city itself. The United Nations has had an ongoing presence in Aleppo since 2014 and responded immediately to the additional humanitarian needs caused by the displacement of so many. The level of assistance was immediately increased and the United Nations has since continued to address the needs of those people displaced from or returning to eastern Aleppo, alongside the brave humanitarians working for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as other national and international non-governmental organizations.

Nearly 90 per cent of the supplies distributed by all partners are provided by the United Nations, and just last week $19 million was released from the OCHA-managed Syria Humanitarian Fund to support immediate life-saving and early recovery assistance for thousands of people. Those funds will provide responses to immediate needs, assist with the rehabilitation of basic services and removal rubble and undertake other necessary steps to create the conditions where people can safely return to their homes.

In eastern Aleppo, a total of over 65,000 people have been officially registered as having returned to or having stayed in the eastern districts of the city. Most now live in damaged houses or are scattered across various neighbourhoods, with Hanano hosting the largest number of returnees to date. Other neighbourhoods that registered high levels of returnees include Tariq Al-Bab, Al-Kalaseh and Bustan Al-Qaser. In those areas, the United Nations has been active in providing immediate relief. Food items, medical services, protection and education support have all been provided to those in need.

I am deeply concerned about reports relating to the stockpiles of humanitarian supplies found in eastern Aleppo since the evacuation. I take that extremely seriously. We need to establish the facts and, as I speak, we are following up on those reports urgently. I emphasize to the Council that such matters draw into stark relief the need for unimpeded access of the United Nations and humanitarian partners to all areas in Syria, not only to allow us to deliver, but to monitor the needs and the appropriate distribution of assistance, even after materials have been pre-positioned.

On the outskirts of eastern Aleppo city, there are 5,077 people who have been displaced to the Jibreen collective shelter. Parts of the shelter remain in need of rehabilitation, particularly winterization. The United Nations and its partners have provided hundreds of stoves and other essential winterization items. Furthermore, the United Nations is supporting communal kitchens that provide hot meals for thousands, and a static clinic and, in coordination with the relevant authorities, commenced with the distribution of personal identity documents.

In western Aleppo, over 50,000 are being supported as part of increased regular programming activities already being delivered on a daily basis to support the over 400,000 IDPs inside western parts of the city.

That includes regular distribution of food and non-food items. The United Nations has recently provided 250 metric tons of medical supplies — enough for 300,000 treatment courses — to Aleppo city, and in December provided enough medicine for 430,000 treatments. UNICEF continues emergency water trucking and the provision of fuel for operating wells, which together benefit nearly 1 million people — 400,000 people from water trucking and 600,000 people from public wells — across the city. And together with the Aleppo Department of Education, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations have provided education support to thousands of children and youth.

We must make sure that the record and the positive balance are put in the public domain. The United Nations and others will remain committed and actively engaged in assisting all those in need in Aleppo who we can access, working tirelessly with our humanitarian partners to ease suffering and provide a basis for recovery.

Secondly, I promised to provide an update on Deir ez-Zor. I am deeply concerned for the safety and protection of an estimated 93,500 people in the besieged western side of Deir ez-Zor in Syria following reports of ISIL attacks, resulting in the death and injury of scores of civilians. Since 15 January, ISIL reportedly took control of several areas including the main road and the Deir ez-Zor airport and is gaining ground in several more areas, splitting the besieged enclave in two. Beyond the temporary suspension of air drops by the World Food Programme, the Al-Assad National Hospital was temporarily closed. Water has reportedly also been cut for thousands of people living in ISIL-controlled areas around Deir ez-Zor due to fighting damaging power generators in the area. Mobile communication has reportedly stopped throughout the area.

Thirdly, I turn now to rural Damascus, where the situation remains deeply troubling. Fighting in the Wadi Barada area, just outside of Damascus city, continues and has already displaced an estimated 17,500 people. Water remains cut off from the main source since the fighting began, affecting the primary water supply for some 5.5 million people in Damascus and surrounding areas, who now only have minimal access to water. In response, technical teams comprising the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and water authorities, entered the Wadi Barada area on 13 and 14 January for a preliminary assessment of damages. However, following the assassination of a member of the reconciliation committee, fighting was rekindled and the assessment mission suspended before the repair works could commence. Should such deprivation of water to civilians be determined to have been deliberate, those responsible may have committed a war crime. Accountability must be ensured for the perpetrators of such acts.

Fourthly, I would draw the Council's attention to the military operation in Raqqa district, where I have serious concerns for the safety and security of over 400,000 people in need, including over 150,000 internally displaced people. So far, some 35,000 people have been displaced as a result of the fighting, although many have returned to their homes since the fighting has subsided.

Humanitarian partners are providing a response to those displaced to the north towards Tell Abyad. The majority of the population of Raqqa district is reportedly facing critical problems in meeting immediate needs. Fighting has had an adverse impact on infrastructure such as water and power stations, affecting people's ability to access basic services. Food insecurity is also considered a major problem. Access to Raqqa by the United Nations has been highly constrained due to insecurity and ISIL's restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, with the last United Nations inter-agency convoy to Raqqa taking place in October 2013. Access and security permitting, which they currently do not, the United Nations and humanitarian partners do stand ready nonetheless to respond to further large-scale temporary displacement as military efforts to push ISIL out of Raqqa continue.

After nearly six years of senseless and brutal conflict, we have all been longing for a glimmer of hope that the suffering of the Syrian people might finally be coming to an end. The past few weeks have seen far fewer civilians killed and injured since the ceasefire came into effect on 30 December 2016. In some parts of the country at least, it has given a respite for people who have told us loud and clear that all they want is to be safe and for their families to be protected from violence. But the ceasefire alone is not enough. We must maintain our outrage at what is occurring in Syria and what is being perpetrated against the Syrian people. Now is the time for advocacy and now is the time for renewed determination. I call on the States members of the Council to do all in their power, collectively and individually, to see the following implemented.

First, they must ensure the current ceasefire is sustained, and that it results in increased access after months of stagnation. We need full implementation of the monthly access plan to reach all those in need. Secondly, they must ensure that all parties protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. Thirdly, they must recommit to ensure that the barbaric act of besiegement is immediately lifted across the entire country. Fourthly, I ask that we all rally behind Staffan de Mistura's tireless efforts on behalf of the Secretary-General to find a political solution that brings an end to the conflict and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people. After a chronicle of missed opportunities, this is the time for the various parties to come together and bring an end to this horrendous chapter in Syria's history.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Abdulla.

Mr. Abdulla: Last year, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ertharin Cousin, reported to the Council (see S/PV.7612), stating her grave concern about the deepening humanitarian crisis in Syria and the increasing hardship faced by people the in besieged areas. She warned then that they were falling into despair, malnutrition, starvation and death.

Yet, today, despite some cause for optimism, the situation remains perhaps even more grave. Six years into the crisis, the humanitarian and food-security situation in Syria continues to deteriorate. Seven million people in Syria are already food insecure and an additional 2 million are at risk. That is 9 million people inside Syria — half the current population — who are in need of food, agriculture and livelihood assistance. Four out of five Syrians now live in poverty, with almost 80 per cent of the households across the country struggling to cope with food shortages.

An alarming fact is that food production has hit a record low as widespread insecurity continues to hamper access to land, farming supplies and markets. Fuel is in short supply and infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, is often in a state of damage, all of which make it increasingly difficult for farmers to produce and maintain their livelihoods. The wheat harvest is at an all-time low, estimated at less than 50 per cent of the pre-conflict averages. As such, Syria is in danger of becoming a country of subsistence farmers with most of its commercial and large-scale agricultural base eroded.

Food prices have steadily risen, reaching an increase of 43 per cent in besieged and hard-to-reach areas to which the World Food Programme (WFP) and other humanitarian organizations have no regular access. The highest cost for staple foods was reported in the besieged part of Deir ez-Zor city, in which more than 90,000 people are struggling to survive. The situation remains precarious in other besieged locations in which many people are struggling to get just one meal per day. To date, approximately 4.6 million people, including an estimated 2 million children, live in areas throughout Syria that are very hard to reach. They receive only sporadic humanitarian assistance, and as Under-Secretary-General O'Brien just said, more than 640,000 people are living in 13 besieged locations across of Syria, deprived of the most basic needs, especially food.

During the first several few weeks of 2016, following the Munich agreement, access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas improved considerably. Despite those improvements, recent outbreaks of fighting, insecurity and delays in obtaining the necessary approvals have meant that millions of hungry Syrians were cut off from supplies and left without predictable food deliveries. As an example, in the third quarter of last year, WFP sent food to hard-to-reach and besieged areas through 23 inter-agency conveys; however, only 12 such conveys took place during the last quarter of 2016. Our persistent efforts to improve access continue to be challenged by numerous obstacles, and those were outlined earlier by Under-Secretary-General O'Brien. Access has been our challenge in Syria since the first days of the conflict. WFP continues to consider all options. We have consulted with many partners in world exports. We have considered airdrops, helicopters and delivering food by drones, but, in the end, it always comes down to access and ensuring safety.

I would like to add a few words with regard to Deir ez-Zor and some of the airlifts to which Mr. O'Brien referred. Deir ez-Zor has been unaccessible to humanitarian workers since it fell under the control of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in March 2014. In April 2016, WFP, together with numerous partners and much assistance, began a complex, high-altitude parachute drop, which, as I will explain, delivered quite a lot. But the recent aspects of the security deterioration that Mr. O'Brien mentioned in Deir ez-Zor city, which

was effectively cut in half, and fighting between Government forces and ISIL forced a suspension of that operation on 15 January. That operation had been providing a life line for that besieged population. Yet, before the operation was suspended, we had carried out 177 airdrops delivering food rations, as well as many other supplies, such as medical and hygiene supplies on behalf of all the other humanitarian agencies, to 93,000 people. That amounted to more 3,300 tons of relief items on 4,500 pallets using more than 10,000 parachutes in an unprecedented, highly technical and regrettably high-cost operation.

In another operation in July 2016, we began an airlift operation to the Al-Hassakeh governorate, with planes taking off from Damascus airport and landing in Qamishly airport. Those airlifts were also costly with limited cargo capacity but, again, were the only option to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable and insecure people in the Governorate. To date, we have completed 294 airlifts to Qamishly, delivering 10,000 tons of many food items as well as numerous other humanitarian supplies. Those airlifts have enabled those supplies, food assistance and many other urgently needed items to reach approximately 64,000 people and are part of an inter-agency operation that, I have to advise, is running short of funds.

As I conclude, I would like to say a few words and convey a key message in Arabic, the language of the region.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Access to besieged areas cannot be arbitrary, improvised or accorded only after our repeated requests. Access to all areas that require assistance should be reasonably safe and consistent. Access should not be subject to an unreasonable approval process.

(*spoke in English*)

The Council may rest assured that the World Food Programme will continue to do its utmost to overcome setbacks and challenges to provide life-saving assistance. Together with partners, we continue to look towards new and innovative ways to reach people while hoping that a permanent ceasefire will be put in place to allow for increased, immediate and, above all, sustained access.

But ultimately peace and security are the only solution to the Syrian crisis. As Under-Secretary-General O'Brien said, there is no humanitarian solution to the crisis. A new political commitment to peace is needed so that we can then focus all our energy and efforts on the future of Syrian families, thereby helping them rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

The President: I thank Mr. Abdulla for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Salama.

Mr. Salama: I thank the Council for this opportunity to brief members on the impact of six years of war on the health of the Syrian people. The war in Syria has taken a devastating toll on the people of Syria and the health workers, hospitals and clinics intended to serve them. The war has obviously had a direct impact on the civilian population, with more than half a million people killed and 1.5 million injured. Indeed, until the recent security developments, we estimate that approximately 30,000 people were sustaining war-related injuries every month. Furthermore, in many parts of the country, the war has virtually gutted a once-strong health system. More than half of the country's public hospitals and primary care centres have either closed or are only partially functioning. Approximately two-thirds of health workers have fled the country. Tragically, in 2016 there were reports of more than 100 attacks on hospitals and clinics across the country.

Not surprisingly, the inability or unwillingness of the warring parties to safeguard basic health care has resulted in acute shortages and barriers to access, including for life-saving services, such as trauma care for the injured, medical treatment of common chronic diseases and basic prevention programmes, such as vaccination programmes for children. It is estimated that now one in two children is not protected against major infectious disease killers and that one in four children is at risk of developing serious mental health disorders, with their associated long-term impacts on the children themselves and on the society to which they contribute. More than 300,000 women are not able to get the urgent care they need for a safe pregnancy and delivery. Indeed, the indirect toll on civilian lives may eventually far outweigh the direct toll due to bombs and bullets.

As with our other United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, in the health sector WHO has been challenged to find new and innovative ways to deliver services in that complex context, whether through mobile health clinics or through cross-line and cross-border programmes. In

2016, WHO and partners such as UNICEF and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were able to vaccinate more than 2.5 million children against polio, measles and other diseases; deliver more than 10 million treatments and train more than 16,000 health workers; and assist in medical evacuations of the critically sick and injured. The credit for those results rests with the courageous Syrian health workers, who continue to deliver health care for their people under the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

Unfortunately, in 2017 the ceasefire has not yet translated into sustained improvement in access to health care in the majority of hard-to-reach and besieged areas. As noted by Mr. O'Brien, we are particularly concerned by the situation in Deir ez-Zor, where people are struggling to survive in the besieged enclaves. The Al-Assad University Hospital has temporarily been out of service due to clashes in the area, necessitating the air evacuation of the wounded and the sick. WHO and its partners, such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, stand ready to deliver medical supplies sufficient to cover the needs of the population for three months in Deir ez-Ezor should there be access and a logistics system in place to deliver them.

We also recognize the urgent un-met health care needs in and around Aleppo following the intense hostilities late last year and the resulting population displacement. WHO and its partners are already scaling up our existing primary health-care and other programmes. We are aware of the reports of medical supplies found in warehouses when the Government of Syria regained control over eastern Aleppo. We look forward to receving further details on the quantities and types of supplies in order to determine the appropriate action with the relevant authorities.

Finally, we have four major requests of the Council today aimed at saving lives and underscoring the sanctity of health workers. First, we must ensure that all parties to the conflict permit the evacuation of critically ill and wounded patients and their families from all hard-to-reach and besieged areas of Syria. Secondly, we must ensure that medical teams are granted sustained and unconditional access to all parts of Syria in order to assess needs, monitor programmes — including the distribution of supplies and trained staff — as well as provide direct medical care. Thirdly, we must ensure that essential health supplies, including trauma and surgical supplies, which have been systematically removed from United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoys, are consistently allowed into hard-to-reach and besieged areas.

Finally, the pernicious attacks on health care workers and clinics must end. The perpetrators must be held accountable. These attacks undermine the very foundations of peace and security and have been the subject of previous Security Council deliberations. Equally unacceptable is any use of health-care facilities for military purposes. We should join together to condemn such egregious violations of international humanitarian law and find a practical mechanism to stop them once and for all. Ultimately, the Syrian health-care system will need to be rebuilt, with serious and sustained investment and the support of the entire international community. We will save that discussion for a more hopeful time, which we hope is not far off.

The President: I thank Mr. Salama for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien, Mr. Amir Abdulla and Mr. Peter Salama — for the valuable information they have given us today.

The situation in Syria continues to be shameful. The country continues to be immersed in a bloody civil war that, after six years, has left it in ruins and destroyed the own roots of its society. However, for the first time in many months, there seems to be some improvement. The end of the military conflict in eastern Aleppo, the swift evacuation of its population and the cessation of hostilities at the end of December, reflected in resolution 2336 (2016), have made it possible to reduce substantially the levels of violence in some areas, giving its inhabitants necessary respite.

In addition, the meeting in Astana that took place this week makes it possible to hope that next month in Geneva the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, will manage, based on those exchanges, to give significant new momentum to the political process to put an end to conflict. All of us here trust in the ability of Mr. De Mistura to bring the parties together, reduce tensions and still-existing distrust and to work on the road map charted by resolution 2254 (2015) to achieve a process of political transition that would benefit the Syrian people. He has our full support.

Nevertheless, we are still seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation in Syria which, as pointed out by the briefers today, presents quite a different picture than the political process. Although the end of the siege of eastern Aleppo was a necessary relief, which made it possible to reduce significantly the total number of people residing in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, almost 700,000 people remain there, subsisting with extreme needs, their situation aggravated by the hard winter conditions.

It is neither acceptable nor tolerable that, in spite of the tremendous effort made by humanitarian workers of the United Nations and its partners in the field, in December barely 1 per cent of the total of the population could be reached. Neither is it acceptable or tolerable that none of the convoys included in the January plan were able to reach the recipients, with the exception of one that arrived in Muadamiyat Al-Sham on 7 January as part of a plan approved in November.

It is also highly worrying that, despite the cessation of hostilities in force and the end of the seige of eastern Aleppo, humanitarian access seems to be worsening instead of improving. Also, with regard to deliveries by air in Deir ez-Ezzor, and after the excellent work undertaken by the World Food Programme, which has completed 177 deliveries to date, unfortunately, on 15 January operations were suspended due to the intense fighting in the area. We hope that they can restart shortly.

I wish to briefly mention the situation in Wadi Barada. Let it be clear: the sabotage over the past month of the water supplies that serve the capital, Damascus, and surrounding areas — whoever may be responsible — should be considered a war crime, one of many suffered daily by the Syrian people. We hope that soon a cease fire will be achieved that will make it possible to quickly re-establish access to drinking water for more than 5 million people.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the priorities of Uruguay with regard to substantially improving the Syrian humanitarian situation. It is necessary that the cessation of hostilities be consolidated throughout the territory; that all parties to the conflict continue to protect and improve the protection of citizens, infrastructure, hospitals and medical and health-care staff; that all sieges be lifted; that, in accordance with the monthly plans submitted by the United Nations, immediate and sustained humanitarian access be granted throughout the country; that the fight against terrorism in all its forms be continued; and that progress be made towards reaching a political solution to the conflict.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Bolivia would like to thank the representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization for their briefings today on the tragic situation facing the Syrian people.

Bolivia would also like to emphasize the fact that the ceasefire instituted by Russia, Turkey and Iran has been effective and has had a direct impact not just on the possibility of improving the humanitarian situation but also, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/58) states, on reducing the level of violence in the country. It represents a step in the right direction for reaching a political outcome that can end the violence, prevent further bloodshed among civilians and provide them with immediate humanitarian access. We welcome the efforts of all the humanitarian organizations on the ground, including the work of the Red Crescent, in conditions that have been described as extremely difficult. In that regard, we urge all parties to abide strictly by international humanitarian law in order to ensure the success of the ceasefire, the protection of civilians and civilian structures, the lifting of the sieges and, of course, a political solution to the conflict. We also welcome the fact that, according to the communiqué issued after the meeting in Astana, the parties are seeking a political outcome and a ceasefire that will contribute to "reducing violence, building confidence [and] ensuring unhindered humanitarian access swiftly and smoothly". That is of course a step in the right direction for an intra-Syrian political process conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, aimed at ending this tragic conflict once and for all.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-SecretaryGeneral for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council has not discussed the situation in Yemen since October (see S/PV.7797). For this reason, I believe that it is a particularly opportune moment for the Council to receive an update on the political negotiations, including for a renewed cessation of hostilities, and on the dire humanitarian situation.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in Yemen.

The past several months have seen a dangerous escalation of military activities, with tragic consequences for the Yemeni people. Armed hostilities have continued in many areas, including Sana'a governorate, Taiz city and the border area between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Civilians in Taiz continue to suffer from indiscriminate shelling in residential areas of the city, with such attacks increasing in recent days. Ground shelling and air strikes have also escalated along the western coastline following the launch of Operation Golden Spear by the Government of Yemen and allied forces.

Both sides continue to claim in the media that they have made significant military progress, but I remain convinced that there is no possibility of a military solution. We are witnessing daily attacks and counterattacks. Those who seek a military solution will only prolong the suffering caused by the war, allow the terrorist threat to continue to grow, and deepen the challenges of Yemen's eventual recovery following the war. The continued military activity is all the more tragic as a viable proposal for peace is on the table and within reach of both parties. With political courage and will, this war can be stopped.

On 18 December, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting in Riyadh with the Foreign Ministers of the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and the United Kingdom, and I was invited to join. The meeting ended with an urgent call for a rapid recommitment to a cessation of hostilities, followed by a two-week preparatory period in order to look into the violations that have taken place every time a cessation of hostilities has been announced.

We want to ensure that this time the parties honour the cessation of hostilities fully and effectively in order to allow assistance to be provided to the Yemeni people. My Office has completed preparations for the preparatory meeting, which includes a five-day workshop for representatives from both sides to develop a concrete joint implementation plan to ensure the strengthening of the cessation of hostilities and that no violations occure by either party. The successful implementation of the cessation of hostilities will bring about a much-needed respite for many Yemenis, as well as hope after suffering long months of war, and will pave the way for progress towards a political agreement.

I met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan two days after he took up his position. He stated that his country was willing to host the workshop. He also expressed the Kingdom's willingness to provide any assistance needed for the people of Yemen and to support peace in that country. We were not surprised at that stance, given that Jordan hosts a large number of neighbouring countries' citizens, including Yemenis, providing them safe shelter and basic health services.

In that regard, I welcome the positive response of the Yemeni Government and the fact that it has agreed to send its representatives to the workshop. I hope that the delegation of Ansar Allah and General People's Congress will confirm their participation at that gathering.

On the political front, the statement issued at the meeting on 18 December in Riyadh called on the parties to respond constructively to the United Nations

proposal I submitted in preparation for a next round of cosultations. While the parties still have some concerns and reservations, I will continue my consultations with them in order to arrive at compromises and a convergence of views.

To a large extent, this proposal builds on the main points discussed during the Kuwait consultations and paves the way towards a political solution that is in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), and the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism. It is also the first step along the path towards peace and sets the stage for a transitional period in accordance with the National Dialogue Conference decisions. The international community has welcomed that proposal.

In November, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the United States helped us to ensure that the delegation of Ansar Allah and General People's Congress agreed to a road map as a negotiable working paper, which was a positive development. However, they did not provide any practical proposals or detailed plans for security arrangements dealing with military withdrawal or the handover of heavy weaponry. Therefore, no progress was possible, specially given that the security component is essential and fundamental to peace. We discussed these topics in details during my latest visit to Sana'a.

Undoubtedly, the decision by Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress to set up a parallel Government within the Supreme Political Council throws up an additional barrier along the road to peace and has an adverse impact on trust between the parties. More than once, we have said how dangerous it is to take unilateral decisions in these difficult times and how that will impact the revitalization of State institutions.

On the Government level, since my previous briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7797) I have undertaken two visits to Aden, under difficult and sensitive security conditions. My latest trip took place on 16 January, when I met Yemeni President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Bin-Daghr and Foreign Minister Abdulmalik Al-Mikhlafi. I called on the President to commit publicly to the consultations based on my proposals made in Kuwait and thereafter. Continued criticism of the proposals without agreeing to discuss them in order to make amendments undermine the path towards peace and prolongs the conflict.

I emphasized, and assured President Hadi, that what was being presented by the United Nations were proposals open for discussion in order to reach a comprehensive solution acceptable to all sides and that there was no other way to bring about peace in Yemen and to afford all Yemenis an opportunity to come to the table to address their country's challenges, including the south's historic grievances.

Yemen's economic and humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. According to humanitarian organizations, 18.8 million Yemenis require humanitarian assistance and 2.2 Yemeni children are malnourished — one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition in the world. That is not only a result of poverty, but of a deterioration in basic services in the areas of health, water and sanitation, as well as other factors. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, my colleague Mr. Stephen O'Brien, will be able to provide members more details on the war's terrible impact on the humanitarian situation.

In that regard, the continued closure of the Sana'a airport has added to the overall hardship. Many people who want to leave Yemen to seek medical treatment abroad cannot do so, while Yemenis abroad are unable to return home. As well, the journey to and from Aden airport is too difficult for many to undertake, leaving many people with no option. I call on the Government of Yemen to allow for the resumption of commercial flights to Sana'a without further delay. And I call on all parties to ensure the safety of air navigation. I have addressed a formal letter to all parties calling on them to ensure the safety of the airport and of all civilian commercial aircraft.

The extensive delay in the payment of civil servants' salaries has severely undercut the purchasing power of most Yemeni households. The continuing lack of payments will drive ever more people into destitution. The Government of Yemen, the Central Bank, Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress must work together to ensure the resumption of salary payments to civil servants in all areas of the country. Earlier today, I received information from the Government that salary payments had resumed.

It will also be critical, in cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank, to fully fund the social welfare fund that provides cash payments to the most vulnerable people in Yemen. I also encourage international partners to find ways to ensure access to hard currency

for importers of basic commodities, so as to guarantee the continuity of such imports.

There is a clear path out of the violence that plagues Yemen. Although it requires some concessions, the proposals that I put forward are based on the concerns and needs of both sides and take in.o account the political, security and social situation in the country, while providing for a secure future for Yemen and Yemenis. I will present the sides with a detailed timetable that reflects the political and security stages and their sequencing, as we envisage it. I call upon the parties to demonstrate political wisdom and responsibility in order to make the necessary progress.

Since my previous briefing to the Council, over the past few weeks I have held meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Jordan, as well as Sweden. I also met with the Deputy Foreign Minsters of China and the Russian Federation. I have seen that there is in fact consensus for the efforts of the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to mention the support I received from the Russian Embassy in Sana'a during my latest visit. I hope that the international community will continue to bring pressure to bear on the parties so that they recommit within the next few days to a cessation of hostilities. I am confident that improvements in the security situation will open up space for a renewed political dialogue, which we hope will bring about a solution.

I have seen for myself the suffering of the Yemeni people. I just returned from a devastated Sana'a. I saw at first hand the suffering of Yemeni women and men. I hope that Yemeni leaders will be able to see the impact that this tragedy has had on the country, take the bold decision to commit to a political solution and put an end to the conflict. The solution to the Yemeni situation is not external. The United Nations and the international community can help to promote, mediate and bring pressure to bear. But the key decisions and compromises must be made by Yemenis and will depend upon their ability to make consessions. Failing that, history will judge them harshly.

The President: I thank Mr. Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.7797), the humanitarian situaition in Yemen has further deteriortated, while the armed conflict has continued to intensify, with daily air strikes and armed clashes. In the past week, we received reports of at least 365 conflict-related security incidents, up from 231 in the previous week, and at least 100 airstrikes in Taiz governorate alone. During the last quarter of 2016, approximately 2,400 incidents consisting of air strikes, armed clashes and shelling were reported throughout Yemen. This is a 12 per cent increase from the previous three months. Today I am particularly concerned about civilians caught up in the crossfire in Mokha, Taiz governorate's coastal region. I have received reports that more than 5,000 families are fleeing.

It is clear that in this fight the most affected are the ordinary Yemeni people, who continue to suffer. Overall, more than two thirds of the population — an alarming 18.8 million, as we have heard — is in need of humanitarian and protection assistance, including an astounding 10.3 million Yemenis who require immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives. This is about the size of the entire population of Sweden, and the numbers are rising. More than 2 million people are internally displaced. By 31 December, 7,469 Yemenis had been killed and 40,483 injured owing to the conflict. The true number is likely to be higher, as we report only cases by health facilities that are still functioning — a mere 45 per cent.

Overall, the plight of children remains grim, with a child under the age of 5 dying every 10 minutes of preventable causes. A grim illustration of the impact on children is the airstrikes two weeks ago near a petrol station next to a school in Sana'a governorate's Nihm district that resulted in the death of one schoolgirl and injury to four others. A week earlier, on 3 January, a school was completely destroyed in Sa'ada governorate's Safra district, reportedly — and luckily — without any child casualties. Since the hostilities began in March 2015, more than 1,400 children have been killed and over 2,140 injured. Another 1,441 children, some as young as 8, have been recruited by warring parties. The actual numbers are likely to be much higher.

Beyond the direct casualties of the armed conflict, there are also the so-called silent deaths of Yemenis that go largely unnoticed and unrecorded. Girls, boys, women and men are dying of hunger and diseases that are easily preventable and treatable. Unfortunately, vital food commodities and medicines cannot be imported easily owing to access restrictions imposed by all parties. People with chronic diseases, including

high blood pressure and diabetes, who are not receiving life-sustaining treatment due to medical shortages are slowly dying.

The conflict in Yemen is now the primary driver of the largest food-security emergency in the world. If there is no immediate action, famine is now a possible scenario for 2017. There are currently 14 million food-insecure people, of whom half are severely food-insecure. This means that Yemenis are not able to feed themselves adequately and are frequently forced to miss meals or eat food with poor nutritional value. At least 2 million people need emergency food assistance to survive. Again, the situation for children is especially grave, as 2.2 million babies, boys and girls are acutely malnourished, and almost half a million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. This represents a 63 per cent increase since late 2015. Children are going to bed hungry every night.

Shockingly, incidents of gender-based violence have reportedly increased by more than 63 per cent since before the conflict. As of this month, there have been 10,806 reported cases. To be clear, this means more rapes, more forced marriages, more child brides and many more unspeakable acts of violence against girls, boys and women compared with two years ago.

All parties to the conflict are failing to take precautions to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. So far, the United Nations has verified more than 325 attacks on schools, health facilities, markets, roads, bridges and even water points. More than two thirds of the damage to public infrastructure is a result of airstrikes. Violations of international humanitarian and human rights law continue unabated and largely with impunity. Attacks against hospitals, schools and other protected civilian structures and facilities must stop immediately. International norms must be respected.

Granting rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is a key obligation under international humanitarian law. Yet people face major challenges in accessing humanitarian aid, and humanitarian actors face impediments to access people in need, including due to active fighting, insecurity, bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of funding.

The closure of Sana'a airport to commercial flights since 9 August has had a disproportionate impact on Yemen's civilians and further increases the humanitarian caseload. The lack of in-country specialist medical care means that more than 20,000 Yemenis are unable to seek treatment abroad. Similarly, life-saving medicines cannot be flown in. Students are unable to resume their studies abroad, and Yemenis outside the country seeking to go home are unable to do so. In addition, the suspension of commercial flights has also meant that journalists can no longer travel to Sana'a and report on Yemen's grave humanitarian situation.

We expect all parties to the conflict, including the Government of Yemen, to do the utmost with the Saudi-led coalition to reopen the airport and airspace to commercial flights. This could include addressing security concerns through previously established flight routing through Bisha, Saudi Arabia, or other airports within the Saudi-led coalition.

Humanitarians now fill in for collapsing public institutions, which at this scale is beyond both our capacity and our remit. The health-care system is in decline. Public infrastructure such as bridges and ports, as well as water and sanitation systems, is being destroyed. The near-collapse of the country's social security and economic institutions has a multiplier effect on humanitarian needs. Yemen's poorest families, widows, orphans, people with disabilities and the elderly are no longer receiving a monthly allowance of 2,500 rials — about $10 — per person. In addition, 1.25 million civil servants, including nurses, doctors and teachers, do not receive salaries regularly. Yemen's middle class is growing poorer, and many are no longer able to provide for their families. While a batch of money arrived in Aden earlier this month, no information has been received as to whether it will reach civil servants in all governorates.

Yemen's contracting economy, the associated liquidity crisis and the continued depreciation of the local currency mean further hardship for Yemen's people. Ninety percent of Yemen's food and fuel and almost all medical supplies are imported. Only 40 per cent of pre-crisis amounts of fuel are now entering the country. Import restrictions are leading to price increases. For instance, in December the price of wheat flour was 25 per cent higher than in the pre-crisis period. Petroleum prices rose by more than 33 per cent. Cooking gas is now 60 per cent more expensive.

The sharp decline in the Central Bank's foreign reserves combined with its move to Aden and lack of liquidity has had a ruinous socioeconomic impact. Yemen could run out of wheat within months unless traders can access lines of credit in the coming weeks.

Foreign banks no longer accept financial transactions with many of Yemen's commercial banks. We must mobilize to sustain the traders' ability to import, replenish the country's stocks of staple food and reverse the trend of growing food insecurity and potential starvation. In addition, some humanitarian organizations are struggling to find enough cash to implement projects. The end result is a country in economic distress, which is translating into acute humanitarian need.

Let me provide the Council with an update on the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). As of 23 January, UNVIM had cleared 324 vessels from 394 requests. Since the beginning of operations, more than 5 million metric tons of cargo have been discharged, including 2 million tons of food and just over 1 million tons of fuel. During this period, 54 vessels were not cleared; 20 vessel clearances were revoked, 28 cancelled and six declined. The Mechanism has completed 21 inspections of suspicious cargo or information presented. Delays in receiving clearances are also due to restrictions imposed by the Saudi-led coalition, such as the hampering of vessels' access to Yemeni Red Sea ports and in the absence of clear lists of prohibited items.

Once goods are offloaded, there are often additional bureaucratic impediments that slow down the transport of commodities to their final destinations. All parties have to be held responsible for those impediments. Moreover, ports have been damaged and need to be repaired. Hudaydah port, Yemen's main port — through which 80 per cent of imports arrive and which was damaged in the conflict in 2015 — has not been rehabilitated. A vessel carrying four mobile cranes procured by the World Food Programme (WFP) has arrived in the Red Sea, but has been ordered by the Saudi authorities to leave Yemeni waters and is now anchored 50 miles off Yemen's coast. The vessel is awaiting the coalition's approval to berth at the port. Those cranes will boost the port's capacity in handling humanitarian cargo. Two of the cranes will be used exclusively by the United Nations, by the WFP, and help expedite the timely delivery of vital humanitarian aid supplies.

In spite of the difficult conditions and tremendous challenges, the humanitarian community delivers. Together in 2016, we reached 5.6 million Yemenis in need with direct assistance and via a coordinated response in 22 governorates. There are five operational hubs — in Aden, Hudaydah, Ibb, Sa'ada, and Sana'a. More than 114 humanitarian organizations are working in Yemen and are delivering life-saving and life-sustaining assistance across the entire county.

In the darkness of conflict, there are some glimpses of hope. Thanks to the swift intervention by humanitarian partners, which established 26 cholera treatment centres and launched a massive containment campaign through water and sanitation interventions, the cholera outbreak, which started in October, is now in decline. We must remain vigilant, as there are still more than 18,000 suspected cases.

In recent weeks, there have been some improvements in overcoming bureaucratic impediments, especially in terms of issuing visas to humanitarian workers. Dialogue is also becoming more effective in leading to a better understanding with parties to the conflict and their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. I welcome the efforts of the Saudi authorities and other partners to strengthen the dialogue and information-sharing with humanitarian partners to overcome the challenges faced in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

For 2017, approximately $2 billion is required to support the humanitarian response, targeting 10 million of the most vulnerable people in Yemen. The increase over 2016 is directly tied to the breakdown of the socioeconomic order, increased suffering and the absence of a cessation of hostilities and a political settlement. The parties to the conflict are closing their ears to the desperate pleas of the Yemeni people and to those of the broader international community. I ask Member States to pledge generously at the forthcoming Yemen pledging conference, to be held late in March.

In conclusion, I request that Council members once again call for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. The Yemeni people need a political solution to the horrendous conflict they are caught up in. I also request that Council members, first, use their influence over the parties to the conflict to ensure that they respect international humanitarian law and provide timely, full and unimpeded humanitarian access; secondly, hold parties to the conflict accountable for breaching their obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure; thirdly, facilitate an increase in commercial imports of essential supplies, facilitate the import of cranes to Hudaydah, support the rehabilitation of the port and extend the mandate of the United

Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen beyond April; fourthly, demand the resumption of commercial flights to Sana'a; and, fifthly, facilitate lines of credit for the purchase of staple food, including wheat, to traders and Yemeni banks, and urge the Government of Yemen to use funds from the first batch of newly printed Yemeni riyals optimally, equitably and without political bias and ensure that civil servants are paid throughout the country.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings.

I would like to highlight the work done by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and to convey my delegation's support for his tireless, rigorous efforts to find a solution to put an end to the conflict. Similarly, I also express our deep gratitude to all those who provide humanitarian aid to Yemen for their tireless and courageous efforts to bring some hope to its beleaguered people.

Uruguay is appalled by the worsening conflict in Yemen, where the worst violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights occur on a daily basis. The fact that the serious conflict in Yemen has received less media coverage than other conflicts, such as those in Syria or South Sudan, does not absolve the perpetrators, the international community nor, much less, the Council, of their responsibility. By way of illustration, how many meetings on Syria have we convened since the last time there was a briefing on Yemen, on 31 October (see S/PV.7797)? We have held no fewer than 13 such meetings.

Uruguay is concerned about the ongoing violence and the dismantling of institutions in Yemen, which have made possible the spread of terrorism. Groups such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula have expanded their operations and found the perfect haven for their activities in the absence of any State presence.

We regret the long stagnation in the peace process, which has not consolidated any positive results. Nevertheless, we support the resumption of the peace process, which for too many months has not yielded any concrete results and is currently constrained due to a very fragile road map. Uruguay once again calls upon the parties to resume dialogue and to fully comply with their commitment to the ceasefire, in order to bring about an environment that is favourable to the restoration of peace. Stability in Yemen also requires a show of commitment from regional stakeholders and their supporters, in particular from countries that have sway over the parties, in order to vigorously seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Uruguay emphatically condemns the continuing attacks on civilian targets in Yemen. Daily air strikes and mortar and missile attacks indiscriminately destroy hospitals, schools, markets, residential buildings and other infrastructure. Cluster munitions, bunker-busting bombs, anti-personnel mines and snipers also create rifts among the civilian population. All stakeholders in Yemen continue to show total contempt for the rules of international humanitarian law, thereby giving rise to great suffering and catastrophic consequences among the civilian population trapped in combat zones.

Yemen, like Syria, is reaching levels of dehumanization like we have seldom seen before. Uruguay condemns all attacks on civilians, be they in Yemen, Syria, Iraq or elsewhere, regardless of who carries them out. We cannot have double standards on this matter. Those responsible for these abhorrent atrocities and their accomplices should be held accountable for their crimes.

We are also worried about the devastating food security crisis that affects more than 14 million Yemenis, over half the population of Yemen. The images we have seen this month of January of Yemeni children literally dying from hunger should suffice to elicit a reaction from us and to urgently call for immediate and unfettered access to humanitarian aid, which regrettably continues to be blocked by both parties to the conflict.

It is time to revitalize the ceasefire and to find a way to return to the negotiating table. We all know that these conflicts have no military solution. The only resolution can be broad and inclusive political agreements reached in direct negotiations among the parties. That should continue to be the main objective of the Security Council and the entire international community. The millions of Yemenis affected by the crisis have the

right — and we the obligation — to tirelessly continue to seek out the best options for achieving peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you, Mr. Olof Skoog, as Ambassador of Sweden and President of the Security Council, for giving us this opportunity to address the Council. This is an opportune occasion for us to express our sincere congratulations to your delegation and the brotherly delegations of Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Italy and Bolivia at the start of the journey in the Security Council to promote international peace and security.

It would be remiss of me not to express my sincere congratulations and good wishes to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres. We believe that his competency will enrich the work of the United Nations. The Yemeni Government and its delegation in New York are ready to work hand in hand with the Secretary-General to find a solution to the Yemeni crisis that would end the coup d'état against the authority and legitimate institutions in Yemen, as well as the aggressive interference by Iran in the affairs of Yemen and of the wider region.

Today marks two years since the start of the unjust war launched by Houthi militias that formed an alliance with the former President against our people and their Republic. It is clear that that plan is falling apart because of the determination of our people and their noble uprising throughout Yemen to eradicate political factions intent on wiping out Yemen's democratic federal State project — the vision of His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, backed by the Yemeni people and its social and political powers.

Since the start of the Houthi coup against our State and its legitimate institutions, in September 2014, we in the Yemeni Government have remained resolutely determined to fully reject bullying and the use of weapons and force. Instead, we must rely on dialogue and accept the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, which our people also accepted. In the light of the ongoing war of annihilation, which was launched by Iran for the sake of its expansionist policies, we reaffirm our position that a solution must be based on the terms of reference governing a peaceful political transition in Yemen — terms agreed upon and supported by Yemen, the United Nations, the region and the international community — as well as a commitment to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

When it was affirmed that it was difficult to implement that resolution, we underscored that, in sum, as perceived by our people and other friendly countries that yearn for stability in Yemen and full adherence to international law, that resolution means an end to the coup d'état and a restoration of constitutional legitimacy. Coup leaders must abide by those terms and accept the presidency of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour — the sponsor of the peaceful political transition in Yemen. Therefore, any other initiative or idea that is not in line with those parameters will be unacceptable and irrational because it will not lead to peace; it will result only in superficial solutions and the crisis in Yemen will continue.

The Government of Yemen reiterates its commitment to peace — a trajectory that was started in Geneva, Biel and Kuwait. We will always be committed to sustainable peace based on those three terms of reference. That is why we refused the Kerry ceasefire plan and called upon the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to provide a new plan that is informed by the outcome of the Kuwait meetings and try to build upon it. For we will not agree to setting an international precedent by legitimizing the coup d'état or sustaining it in any way, shape or form.

During a meeting between the President and Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in the interim capital, Aden, on 16 January, the President stressed that the Government was willing to start work on the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee, which can hold meetings in Dhahran Al-Janoub, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in line with the Kuwaiti agreement, by which coup leaders refuse to abide. We, on the other hand, are committed to the agreement because we believe that no cessation of hostilities can remain in effect without activating all local committees.

Accordingly, last December, the Government accepted the proposal put forward by the Special Envoy to convene a special workshop on the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee, which was scheduled to be held in the Jordanian capital. However, to date the coup leaders have refused to participate in the workshop. Mr. Ahmed stressed that the priority for reaching

peace now is to start the work of the De-Escalation and Coordination Committee. The President has expressed his willingness to announce a cessation of hostilities — for the eighth time — if conditions are conducive to supervising such.

Copious information has been provided on the humanitarian suffering in regions under the control of the coup leaders. Unfortunately, there is no talk about the carnage in Tai'z. We would like to point out that a policy of collective punishment has been carried out against our people over the past two years in every area under the control of the coup leaders.

The coup leaders have also been plundering the State's resources. They have taken all of the money in the Central Bank and have engaged in, and profited from, unlawful trading activity. The looted billions from the Central Bank. That compelled the Yemeni Government to relocate the Central Bank to the interim capital, Aden, after the State declared bankruptcy.

Over the past two months, the Government has tried to generate the necessary liquidity to pay the salaries of civil servants and military personnel. Despite the escalation of punishment by the coup leaders, who threatened any party that cooperated with the Government in facilitating the payment of salaries, yesterday we were successful in transferring all Sana'a salaries to the Al-Kuraimi Islamic Microfinance Bank. We have provided the Office of the Special Envoy copies of all the pertinent reports, agreements and checks.

On 22 January, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the Special Envoy requesting his urgent personal intervention to put pressure on the Houthis and Mr. Saleh to ensure that salaries reached those in need without any obstacles or interference. It is a humanitarian matter and not a political issue. We, in turn, call upon the Security Council to bring pressure to bear on coup leaders in order to facilitate the transfer of salaries to persons in areas under their control so that we do not add to the complexity of the humanitarian situation.

I would like to express my Government's concern about ongoing Houthi militia exploitation of the port at Hudeydah, which they control, as well as other facilities for the provision of fuel, health-care supplies, medication and food. Unfortunately, they are manipulating access to such commodities for blackmail and to subvert trade in order to make enormous ill-gained profits at the expense of the dire humanitarian situation faced by the people of Yemen.

The upheaval created by those responsible for the coup d'état has reached unprecedented levels, in total disregard for human dignity. They are recruiting women and children. Official reports indicate that the militias have recruited 10,000 children and thrust them into the line of fire. That is to be expected from people who have indiscriminately planted in our territory thousands of anti-personnel mineswhich are internationally prohibited. Our people will pay a steep price for such actions after the end of this criminal war.

The continued punishment of Tai'z and the closure of its airport by those responsible for the coup should also be a cause of concern to the international community. Thousands of our brave Yemeni people, including journalists, students, activists, academics and politicians, continue to suffer under the yoke of imprisonment and detention by the militias, which have turned Yemen into a huge jail.

By the end of 2016, the number of detainees had reached 4,414, with 204 of them children. I have personally sent letters to the former and current Secretaries-General, the President of the Security Council, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, the members of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, appealing to their moral conscience to intervene and pressure the militias to end the suffering of those detained and set them free without preconditions or delay. We must allow their relatives to contact them and learn of their fate. To date, unfortunately, that has not been achieved. I told the Special Envoy that we, as the legitimate authorities in the liberated areas, hold no detainees at all. If there are any, we stand ready to discuss their release. Why should we punish people by depriving them of their freedom simply because they refused to accept the coup d'état?

As we all know, the Council will meet tomorrow to discuss the final report (see S/2016/73) submitted by the Panel of Experts on Yemen. I met with the members of the Panel yesterday, and they stressed that their investigations proved that the Houthis and Saleh had no interest in peaceful solutions; they rely on violence as an instrument to achieve their ends. Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh still controls the billions of dollars that he stole and uses them to destabilize the

country and finance the terrorist cells in Yemen. The Government has invited the Panel of Experts to all the areas that it controls. We will work for the success of the sanctions committee's efforts. I would like to thank Ambassador Koro Bessho, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his wise leadership of the Panel.

Before concluding, I would like to underscore the victories that the Yemeni people and armed forces have achieved, as well as their courageous resistance in defeating the militias on all fronts, with the support of the alliance, to restore legitimacy in Yemen, under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates. The latest such victory was the liberation of the port of Mokha and all areas south of the Red Sea. We have accordingly stood steadfast against all threats posed to international navigation.

As everyone knows, those responsible for the coup have, at the instigation of Iran and by using Iranian-made missiles, targeted the United Arab Emirates ship *Swift* and a Spanish vessel transporting liquid natural gas, as well as United States naval ships. Our armed forces achieved further victories in Nihm, near Sana'a. We have been forced to close the Sana'a International Airport to protect civilians and passengers. Given the current military clashes, the Government can in no measure ensure aerial navigation safety. People can, however, reach all parts of Yemen and use the airports in Aden, Seiyun and Riyan, where normal operations have been saliently illustrated by the resumption of departing and arriving commercial flights.

In conclusion, I cannot but stress that the Government firmly believes in the serious work, in cooperation with Mr. António Guterres, to revive the effective partnership required to restore Yemen. We invite the Secretary-General to visit the interim capital so that he can see the developments on the ground for himself. We call on all United Nations agencies to return to the interim capital of Aden now that we can provide the necessary facilities, including on the security level.

We would also like to renew our full support to the efforts made by Mr. Ahmed, the Security Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18 to bring about peace and stability in Yemen. Furthermore, we reiterate our thanks and deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab Republic of Egypt and all the Arab coalition countries that are working diligently towards restoring legitimacy in Yemen. We call upon all members of the Security Council to continue their unified efforts aimed at confronting and settling the crisis that began in 2011. Thanks to this unified stand, much has been achieved in Yemen. We call upon the Council to take a firm position against those responsible for the coup and pressure them to comply with the relevant international resolutions.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7872

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7872nd meeting
Friday, 27 January 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klenin
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 5 December 2016 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2262 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/1032)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 5 December 2016 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2262 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/1032)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/77, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I should like to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1032, which contains the text of a letter dated 5 December 2016 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2262 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2339 (2017).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2339 (2017), which renews the sanctions regime, or rather the restrictive measures, against the Central African Republic and in support of the political process in that country. This renewal was justified even though the situation in the Central African Republic is stabilizing progressively, even though the capital, Bangui, is today in general peaceful and even though the President-elect — supported by his Government — is at work. We know that the overall situation remains precarious. That is why there is a need for the renewed, unanimous support of the international community through the Security Council.

Armed groups are fighting one another and maintaining a high level of violence. Many of them take advantage of the weaknesses in the justice system to continue their criminal activities, and some have not given up the hope of spoiling the political and reconciliation processes in an attempt to drive the Central African Republic back into crisis. The resolution renews the same sanctions measures, which include an arms embargo, a travel ban and an assets freeze. However, it changes the designation criteria. Sexual violence is now fully recognized, which makes it possible to increase the visibility of such crimes and to send a strong message.

The resolution also seeks to strengthen the application of the travel ban, as Member States are encouraged to step up collaboration with airlines in order to identify individuals subject to travel ban. It also requests Central African Republic authorities to strengthen oversight over Central African Republic passports to ensure that expired or outdated passports are not used for prohibited travel. And, finally, the resolution paves the way for the development of criteria aimed at adjusting the arms embargo at the appropriate time, based on the developments on the ground. However, given the current situation and the flow of weapons in the country, such changes must be considered carefully.

The position of France is that the restrictive measures should support a political process and change in accordance with the situation on the ground. We are also sending the message to the Central African Republic authorities that the arms embargo could be modified in due course, in particular in accordance with progress made in the area of security sector reform. This message is important to our follow-up action in the Central African Republic.

I would once again like to welcome the unanimous adoption of the resolution, which bears witness to the firm and unanimous commitment of the Security Council to support the political and reconciliation processes in that country, and in support as well as of the progress made daily thanks to the efforts of the people and the Government of the Central African Republic. This is a very clear signal to those who would undermine the ongoing political process, which the entire international community is watching.

The President: I now give the floor to the represenative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, as well as your entire team for the excellent manner in which the Swedish presidency is conducting the work of the Security Council in the first month of its mandate. I should also like to express by best wishes for success to the other new members of the Council.

The renewal of sanctions is entire justified by the ongoing pressing threat posed by armed groups and those who continue to attempt to do everything they can to derail the stabilization and reconciliation process. Resolution 2339 (2017) includes new provisions, especially with regard to the implementation of the travel ban and the identification of sexual violence as a separate criterion. Other provisions pertain to the Government of the Central African Republic, specifically with regard to the arms embargo and exemption requests.

The Security Council has a crucial role in preventing conflict, as was forcefully underscored during the open debate held on 10 January (see S/PV.7857). We believe that the adoption of sanctions regimes is part of that role. The proliferation of armed groups — I might even say "well armed groups" — is an ongoing cause of serious concern, for we know that the Central African Republic is prone to relapse into conflict. Clearly, it is difficult to get people to understand that sanctions are not punishment, but instead a necessary evil. Reactions calling for the lifting of the embargo reflect a lack of understanding when it comes to the uncontrolled circulation of weapons in the Central African Republic. I welcome the outstanding work done by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, whose mandate was renewed under resolution 2262 (2016) with a view to the drafting of the Panel's final report (see S/2016/1032), which includes important, relevant and very useful information in support of the renewal of the sanctions.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, for organizing the meeting held on 25 January, which allowed for representatives of neighbouring and other countries to pronounce themselves on the measures taken by their respective Governments to better ensure the implementation of the sanctions. The conclusion that emerged from that exchange of views was that it is difficult to achieve the expected results so long as there continues to be a lack of cooperation in this area.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the delegations that contributed to the drafting of resolution 2339 (2017), which the members of the Council just adopted unanimously. On behalf of the delegation of the Central African Republic, I express my deepest gratitude.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7873

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7873rd meeting
Friday, 27 January 2017, 10.20 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2017/21)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2017/21)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdusalam Hadliyeh Omer, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia; and Ms. Asha Gelle Dirie, founder and Executive Director of the Asha Gelle Foundation.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/21, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on Somalia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Keating.

Mr. Keating: We meet at an auspicious moment, at the conclusion of an extended and exhaustive parliamentary electoral process and just 12 days before the election of a new President. We also meet at a time when Al-Shabaab is doing everything it can to discredit and disrupt the process, as we are seeing in Mogadishu and in the attack in Kulbiyo today. Allow me to extend my deepest condolences to the families of the soldiers and civilians whose lives have been lost.

An immediate priority is to ensure that the date set by the Joint Federal Election Committee for the presidential vote is adhered to. The date has been set on technical grounds, and pressures to change it on political grounds should be resisted. It is also essential that the last stage of this process be conducted transparently, according to the rules that have been agreed and that have been designed to ensure a free and fair election. All candidates must honour the provisions of the code of conduct they signed when registering their candidacy.

This is particularly important because the parliamentary stage of the process was marred by several instances of malpractice, including bribery and vote-buying, harassment and intimidation, and manipulation as well as repeated and protracted delays. Some were high-profile and egregious, though the majority of contests were correctly conducted. They were widely watched, including through social media.

The electoral process has held up a mirror to Somalis in which they have seen the good and the bad regarding how power is exercised, the relationship between elders, clan power brokers, politicians, business, ordinary citizens, women and men. They do not like everything they have seen, least of all the levels of corruption and the absence of institutions that can ensure legal and financial accountability.

Many important lessons have been learned. The ad hoc electoral bodies have done a remarkable job, but had difficulties withstanding political pressure, threats and inducements. The electoral timetable was subject to repeated delays, often because the process was used to try to resolve very long-standing disputes between clans, states and other actors.

The point is that the process was essentially a political one, used for inter- and intra-clan negotiations and reconciliation, and should be in part evaluated as such. The electoral features were essential, as they set the stage for the move to universal suffrage.

These lessons must be addressed in planning the one-person, one-vote elections scheduled for 2020. The National Independent Electoral Commission needs to be empowered, a voter registry established and a robust legal mechanism put in place to adjudicate disputes and sanction abusive behavior. Efforts in this regard must begin as soon as the electoral process concludes.

Despite the problems it has faced, the process has had very encouraging outcomes and marks an important milestone in Somalia's evolution and post-conflict transformation. An Upper House has come into existence, its 54 members chosen on a federal State rather than a clan basis. This embodiment of the

emerging federal character of Somalia could play a central role in advancing a genuinely national agenda.

The number of voters has significantly increased. The electorate was expanded from 135 men in 2012 to more than 13,000 individuals, 30 per cent of whom are women. Almost a quarter of the members of Parliament are now women, a truly remarkable achievement and the result of an effective political mobilization supported by the United Nations and the international community and some Somali leaders.

There has been genuine electoral competition. Voting took place in six locations around the country, again reflecting emerging federal State structures. The new Parliament is younger, more diverse and likely to be more responsive to the electorate than the previous one. In short, this Parliament is more legitimate and representative than any since the last elections were held, in 1969.

And despite the horrendous attack by Al-Shabaab on a hotel used by parliamentarians in Mogadishu only two days ago, terrorists have been unable to derail the electoral process. This in and of itself is an important message. Mogadishu will remain an unusually target-rich environment until the presidential election is concluded, another reason why the schedule should not be allowed to slip.

Let me pay tribute here also to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and to the Somali security and intelligence forces for protecting electoral sites around the country. They deserve great credit for fulfilling a dangerous job in very difficult circumstances.

The election of a President accepted as legitimate by the population and by the international community will set the stage for Somalia to tackle the serious challenges ahead. However, if voting for the next President is not secret or seen as compromised by corruption, coercion or external interference, then the country could face a protracted period of uncertainty.

This is the last thing Somalia needs. Somalis expect and deserve an administration that will address a number of urgent priorities. Many of these are on the agenda of the presidential candidates, including the incumbent. Let me name four: reform of the security sector; acceleration of the constitutional review; reconciliation and the resolution of many festering conflicts around the country; and strengthening governance, at both the centre and locally, both to generate revenues and provide services.

Unfortunately, there is also a fifth, urgent priority: responding to the current drought. Five million people are estimated to be in need around the country, from Somaliland and Puntland in the north to coastal areas in the centre and Jubaland in the south. An estimated 320,000 children under 5 are acutely malnourished. Coping capacities have been eroded to the point of collapse.

The drought response plan seeks $864 million, $300 million of which is required in the first quarter of this year. The Famine Early Warning System Network reports that famine is now looming and that urgent action to ramp up assistance and ensure access is needed to mitigate the potential for a large-scale loss of life. The drought also has serious political and security implications. It is exacerbating competition for resources such as water and intensifying local conflicts. The number of displaced persons is visibly growing. Reports and images of malnutrition are circulating on social media.

The perceived inability of the federal and local governments to respond will damage their legitimacy and will be exploited by Al-Shabaab. The drought is being cited by Somaliland as a key factor in postponing its elections from March until October. Revenues from the livestock trade are dropping, and financial resources committed to drought response will impact public and security-sector payroll commitments. In a nutshell, failure to support the drought response could halt and even undermine the pursuit of key State-building and peacebuilding objectives.

Security-sector reform must not be delayed or derailed. The prospects for peace and stability depend upon Somalis assuming greater political and financial responsibility for their own security. A plan for achieving this is urgently required.

AMISOM and the troop-contributing countries, as they have made clear, will not stay forever. Their presence has been and remains indispensable to securing Somalia, to creating the space for the federal State-building project and to protecting the elections. They will not stay unless the immediate funding issues are addressed and unless they believe that there is a credible plan whereby the Somali security forces and police are able to hold those areas that have been liberated from Al-Shabaab.

The 20 per cent cut in the European Union's (EU) generous support for the African Union (AU) in Somalia is a source of great concern. AMISOM funding needs to be put on a sustainable and predictable basis. I urge the Council to review the options for doing this, including the use of assessed contributions. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia will no doubt address the Council on these matters, including the need for immediate support for the planned offensive against Al-Shabaab.

But even as the financial problem is addressed, the larger issue of sustainable security in Somalia remains, given additional urgency by the stated intention of several troop-contributing countries to leave. Key to this will be building Somali national security forces, whether army, police, maritime or intelligence, that reflect the emerging federal State; that are trusted by all Somalis and not seen as monopolized by certain clans; that are accountable to the political leadership; and that are affordable.

Years of investment by the international community have yielded limited results. Al-Shabaab is degraded but remains a potent threat. One reason is that the approach to security has in the past been largely military and operational. That is of course essential, but not enough.

The imperative for the incoming President and Government is to reach a political agreement among Somalis regarding the architecture, ownership, funding and purpose of the security forces as the basis for more coherent and coordinated international support by the international community, notably the African Union, the United Nations and its partners. I hope the necessary elements can be put in place by the time of the next high-level conference on Somalia, scheduled to take place in London in May.

The African Union and the United Nations are committed to working closely together with major investors, the broader international community and the new Somali Administration on a comprehensive approach to security. That effort must draw upon the respective capacities and strengths of the key stakeholders, whether in funding and supporting AMISOM, building Somali national security forces, establishing and extending the rule of law and State authority at the local level or preventing and countering violent extremism.

Sustainable security and Somalia's sovereignty require a reduction in its heavy financial dependence upon the outside world, as well as success in raising domestic revenues for the provision of public goods, including the rule of law and security. The international financial institutions have a critical role to strengthen financial management capacities and accountability mechanisms.

Another priority is the resumption of the constitutional review process to address critical outstanding political issues. Those include the delineation of responsibilities between the President and the Prime Minister and between the Upper House and the House of the People, as well as between the respective roles and responsibilities of the Federal Government and the Federal member states in a range of areas, including resource- and revenue-sharing, the judicial system and the road map towards one-person, one-vote elections. The agreement reached between the Federal Government and member states on policing sets a good precedent; it now needs to be implemented.

The constitutional review process is all the more meaningful now that the Federal map of Somalia is complete, with the creation of Hir-Shabelle in November. The electoral process has put into sharp relief the many unresolved disputes and conflicts around the country. The most high profile are between Somaliland and Somalia, and the dispute in Galkayo, but there are at least half a dozen others, any one of which has the potential to turn violent at great human and political cost. My Somali interlocutors have made it clear that they want the United Nations, working with its AU, EU and Intergovernmental Authority on Development partners, to focus on building Somali capacities to prevent and resolve conflicts and to support reconciliation processes. Grounding that political process in the rule of law, with a strong and constructive role by the new Parliament, could be one of the strongest guarantors of long-term stability and durable governance reform in Somalia.

Ordinary Somalis must benefit from our collective efforts. Significant work remains to be done to improve the country's dismal human rights situation. I am particularly concerned by the plight of children affected by armed conflict and the unacceptable incidence of abduction and forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab. The majority of its militants consist of children deliberately targeted in communities and areas under Al-Shabaab's control. I would like to add my voice to that of Secretary-

General Guterres, as he highlighted in his recent report (S/2016/1098) on children and armed conflict, to speak out against that alarming situation.

As requested by the Security Council, the United Nations family has started a review of its presence in Somalia, with a view to supporting the next political cycle and, in particular, to addressing the priorities I have just outlined. I would like to mention that, given the postponements of the electoral process, the review will obviously not be completed by the end of this month. However, we intend to engage with the new Government as soon as possible and to revert to the Council in the coming months.

Allow me to conclude by thanking members of the Council for their unified position on Somalia and the support that I and my Office are receiving from them. As I have said before, progress in Somalia is fragile and reversible, and fraught with complexity. But the stage is gradually being set for Somalia to move to a new phase in sustaining peace, preventing and resolving violent conflict and building a functional, Federal State. Ultimately, it is the Somalis who will determine their own fate — but the Council's support is central to their chances of success.

The President: I thank Mr. Keating for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Madeira.

Mr. Madeira: On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and of Ambassador Ismail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, who were unable to come here today because of the ongoing African Union (AU) Summit, I warmly greet you, Mr. President, and all members of the Security Council.

Since my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7778) there have been important and encouraging political and security developments in Somalia. Despite enormous and multiple challenges, Somalis have defied the odds and completed their parliamentary election. A new, bicameral Federal Parliament is now in place in Somalia as a result of a highly disputed and engaging electoral process. The presidential election is scheduled to take place on 8 February, as announced. The African Union and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in close partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United Nations and other international partners, stood by Somalia and provided the Parliament, the Government, the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team, the State-Level Indirect Electoral Implementation Team, as well as the independent electoral dispute resolution mechanism, all the support, assistance and advice it could to ensure that the electoral process was conducted in accordance with the approved terms of reference and that its credibility was enhanced by ensuring that allegations of malpractice and other irregularities were objectively, properly and timely addressed, as well as to ensure that attempts by Al-Shabaab to taint and discredit its final outcome did not succeed.

The political environment is one of hope and confidence, as the newly inaugurated Speaker of the House of the People announced the priorities of the national political agenda as being the continuation and completion of the constitutional review, the formation of political parties, the establishment of local Governments, the resumption of dialogue with Somaliland, the strengthening of revenue-collection capacity and the building of State institutions and the enhancement of their capacity to deliver basic essential services to the people. As partners united in a common struggle against violent extremism and destabilization, we, the members of the international community, are called to support the Parliament not only in achieving those goals, but also in enhancing its role as the privileged forum for dialogue, political debate and negotiation, national reconciliation and cohesion, as the rightful representative, the mouthpiece and the legitimate interpreter of the will, aspirations and apprehensions of the people of Somalia for the next four years.

Despite being the result of an electoral process taht fell far short of the cherished one-person, one-vote ideal, the establishment of this Parliament represents progress and displays unique characteristics. After having been highly scrutinized by their own communities, the members of Parliament won the trust of their people when they emerged victorious from an electoral contest in which the majority of 51 delegates voted for each one of them. That feature did not exist in 2012, when only a few elders had the right and power to determine alone who should represent their community and the people of Somalia. Fifteen per cent of the new parliamentarians are youth between 25 and 35 years of age, and 24 per cent of the Parliament is made up of women. Those two social categories represent the majority of the Somali population today. They are the face of the most vibrant and are the most enduring feature of the Somali society.

Many have been exposed to different political, social and cultural environments, which is an asset in itself. If properly harnessed, this new reality has the potential to help Somalia move more swiftly away from its current predicament.

Another important development in the period under consideration is the fact that, despite Al-Shabaab's vow to thwart the process, the parliamentary election took place in all six of the designated electoral centres without any security incidents that could be attributed to Al-Shabaab. That was possible because of the professionalism and close coordination and cooperation that exists between the Somali national security forces and AMISOM, the effectiveness of the plan they put in place, as well as the enhanced and sustained exchange of real time actionable intelligence. That effort is continuing and producing commendable results in other areas of joint endeavour.

The gains accumulated with the successful launch of regional states could be compromised if the current political unease that is witnessed in a good number of those states is not properly tackled and addressed in a timely manner. The continued existence of such tensions has the potential to arouse the appetites of negative armed groups, who normally prey on such convoluted environments, and escalate violence to unexpected and challenging levels.

AMISOM is working hand in hand with the Somali national security forces. It continues to provide a secure environment in which the Somali political process can thrive. Although weakened, Al-Shabaab continues to engage in targeted assassinations, direct and indirect fire, ambushes, reinforced with improvised explosive devices on AMISOM convoys along supply routes, the hurling of grenades, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and infiltration across all sectors, including in Mogadishu. Despite logistical, financial and operational challenges, AMISOM continues to support the Somali national security forces' operations, administration and training in its areas of responsibility. Moreover, AMISOM police units are continuing to carry out their mandated tasks in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Kismayo, Beledweyne, Jowhar and Adado. Such activities are taking place with immense sacrifice by the troop- and police-contributing countries and in the context of inadequate and very limited resources.

The reality in the theatre of operations has changed. The enemy is resorting to new tactics that pose new challenges. The need to adjust to those new challenges and overcome the enemy is pressing. The terrorist group continues to maintain control of pockets of territories around the Jubba Valley corridor and along the north-eastern coastline. Their stronghold in those areas has been reinforced by the growing influence and influx of foreign fighters, in large part through neighbouring Yemen. Those territories must be recovered from the enemy, as an integral part of the process for its degradation and eventual defeat.

To that end, the African Union reiterates its call for the deployment of additional forces and key combat and stabilization capabilities in order to enable AMISOM and the Somali national security forces to conduct expanded offensive operations. There is urgency for the United Nations and other members of the international community to provide one-time support to additional forces of up to 4,000 troops in the form of the provision of rations, fuel, transport and medicine for a limited duration, to allow for the conduct of specific military operations as a catalyst for an imminent AMISOM drawdown from Somalia.

It has become abundantly clear to us that, no matter how effective AMISOM may be, there can be no lasting and sustainable peace and security in Somalia unless capable and properly empowered Somali national security forces are in place. We therefore ask that support continue to be provided to the Somali national security forces not only for the upcoming offensive operations, but also in the context of the overall effort of building a comprehensive and capable Somali security apparatus. To that effect, we insist on the need for a better coordinated, complementary and mutually reinforcing partner intervention in the area of security in Somalia. Our individual and dispersed interventions, as much as they are accepted and appreciated, are having limited effect on our joint security effort in the country.

We will continue to join hands with the United Nations in our effort to work closely with our partners in this endeavour. Even so, a comprehensive approach to security is indispensable. That should be anchored on the concurrence of mutually reinforcing factors, such as the presence and the adequate territorial expansion of functioning State institutions, democratic governance, the provision of humanitarian assistance and other essential services to the people, dispute resolution mechanisms, building capable national security forces and preventing and addressing the conditions conducive

to violent extremism and radicalization, which lead to terrorism. That is the best way of guaranteeing sustainable peace and security to Somalia. We recognize that partners, such as the United Kingdom and others, are doing a very commendable job in that regard. We look forward to continue working with them in this area.

We are happy that a suitable solution was found for the payment of stipends to the Burundian contingent serving in AMISOM. Nonetheless, this problem is a reflection of the limited resources and funding that AMISOM is facing. A sustainable, lasting and acceptable solution must be found to ensure that AMISOM is properly funded. We are fighting with our bare hands against an enemy that has acquired expertise to produce explosive devices that are powerful enough to bring down this building. Taking into account the possibility of considering an assessed contribution for the funding of AMISOM has now become very important.

The President: I thank Mr. Madeira for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Dirie.

Ms. Dirie: It is an honour for me to address the Security Council on the state of women's political representation in Somalia. Because of time constraints, I cannot cover all of the key milestones, achievements, challenges and lessons learned in the 2016 electoral process. However, a document has been distributed.

The Committee of Goodwill Ambassadors, which I have the privilege of chairing, was appointed by the Federal President of Somalia to help women secure 30 per cent of the seats in both houses of Parliament. That was the goal agreed by the country's political leaders in the National Leadership Forum. As in other countries, advancing women's political empowerment in Somalia is a challenging task. Despite the huge contributions that they make to society, women are often excluded from decision-making and leadership roles. In 2012, women were selected for only 14 per cent of the seats in the Federal Parliament. The National Leadership Forum's decision for the 2016 electoral process to reserve a minimum of 30 per cent of the parliamentary seats for women was therefore very encouraging.

To achieve that goal, the Goodwill Ambassadors first carried out a clan-mapping exercise showing the distribution of reserved seats per clan. The detailed mapping schematic has also been attached to my notes, which were just circulated in the Chamber. We then launched an advocacy campaign involving civil society actors and political lobbyists, as well as Federal and state Women's Affairs Ministries, to secure the buy-in of political leaders and clan elders. We received enormous support and encouragement from the United Nations, and from the international community in general, in our quest to realize the 30 per cent goal, and I would like to express my thanks for the partnership and collective efforts of the Somali Federal Government, the National Leadership Forum, the Women's Affairs Ministries, civil society, women activists, the United Nations-African Union Integrated Gender Office, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, the European Union, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and members of the diplomatic community. Women were elected to 25 per cent of the seats in both houses of the new Parliament, among them my fellow Goodwill Ambassadors. That is a substantial and unprecedented achievement for Somali women and for the society as a whole. We faced numerous challenges and learned important lessons in the course of our work. I would like to mention several of those lessons that should be considered in preparation for the 2020 universal elections.

In the absence of a legally binding provision, the political decision to reserve 30 per cent of the seats for women was extremely difficult to enforce. No one was, or could be, held responsible and accountable for their action or inaction. A secured legal provision is therefore critical to advancing women's political equality. Securing the reserved seats for women relied in large measure on the will of clan elders, who are traditionally opposed to women's political participation. That affected women's ability to secure clan endorsement and to operate freely without threats and intimidation. A massive structural transformation is required to advance women's representation in politics and the democratization process in Somalia.

Throughout the electoral process, women presented a unified position that served as a source of strength. Together with the Goodwill Ambassadors, civil society and the Women's Affairs Ministries, we all worked in a united fashion that had a very positive impact on our campaign. The lack of adequate financial and logistical support posed a significant challenge to women candidates during the campaign period. Furthermore, women were disproportionately affected by election-related corruption and abuses that weakened

their position vis-à-vis the clan elders, the state-level Electoral Implementation Teams and state authorities. Provisions for adequate support and the establishment of a level playing field will be critical to the success of women candidates in the future.

On behalf of Goodwill Ambassadors, I would like to thank the Government of Sweden, current President of the Security Council, and UN-Women, which facilitated my trip to New York.

The President: I thank Ms. Dirie for her briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by thanking Mr. Keating, Mr. Madeira and, in particular, Ms. Dirie for their detailed briefings. I also welcome the presence in the Chamber of Mr. Omer, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Allow me first to vigorously condemn the suicide attack perpetrated by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group that took place at the Dayah Hotel in Mogadishu this past Wednesday and resulted in dozens of deaths.

At the dawn of a new beginning for Somalia, Uruguay welcomes the establishment of the new Federal Parliament in December 2016 and the election of the Presidents of their respective house. We hope that the process will come to a successful conclusion on 8 February with the election of the new President of Somalia. Uruguay urges that all the necessary measures be taken to ensure a review of the provisional Federal Constitution, which we consider vital for Somalia to become a true constitutional democracy. The support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the financial assistance of the international community are vital for the timely adoption of the permanent Constitution.

Uruguay recognizes the efforts made to reach the target of 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament for women. Although this time the goal was not achieved, the result has shown a transformation in the representation and political participation of women in Somalia. With such an important precedent, efforts must be redoubled to achieve that goal in 2020, as well as effectively implement the democratic principle of one-person, one-vote.

Security sector reform, in particular the rapid and effective development of the Somali National Army, is vital so that Government security forces, including the police, can assume greater responsibility for peacekeeping and the security and protection of Somali citizens.

Uruguay is very concerned about the reported increase in human rights violations in Somalia. Despite the Somali authorities' important commitment to protect children over the past several years, the detention of children for alleged links to Al-Shabaab continues to be a reason for concern, as does their murder and other violations of their rights, such as their recruitment by various parties, sexual violence, kidnapping, as well as attacks against schools and hospitals. Uruguay urges the Government of Somalia to ensure that children are treated first as victims and that its guiding principles are in the best interests of children and in accordance with international protection norms. The death sentences that were imposed on children in Puntland are unacceptable.

As a sponsor of resolution 2286 (2016), we note with concern that the most recent report (S/2016/1098) of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict in Somalia indicates that from 2012 to 2016 there were 40 attacks against hospitals in that country. Such attacks, no matter whence they come, are war crimes.

In conclusion, once again, Uruguay recognizes the important work of United Nations Support Office in Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia and considers them fundamental in building the Somali State and making progress in the consolidation of peace and lasting stability in the Horn of Africa.

The President: I shall now make a very brief statement in my capacity as the representative of Sweden.

I should like to thank the briefers and to honour the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia and the representative of civil society, Ms. Dirie.

I would like first to convey our condolences to the Government of Somalia and the Government of Kenya, as well as to the victims' families, for the deplorable terrorist attacks over the past several days.

Sweden welcomes the successful electoral process, and we commend the Somali security forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for

having provided a secure environment in which the process could take place. The new Parliament is inclusive: 25 per cent of parliamentarians are women and 16 per cent are under 35-years-old, with half of its members elected for the first time. It is now important that there be no further delays and that the presidential election be held on 8 February, as scheduled, so that a Government can be formed to take peace and State-building efforts forward.

Building a better future for Somalia should benefit from the input of all Somalis. The presence in the Chamber today of Ms. Asha Gelle Dirie is testimony to a vibrant civil society. We hope that the increased representation of women and youth now seen in Parliament will be replicated at every level in the peace and State-building effort. I want to congratulate Ms. Gelle on her leadership in Somalia. I think she is breaking new ground in a way that could also serve as a model for other countries beyond Somalia.

The report (S/2016/1032) before us today also highlights a severe humanitarian situation, which is likely to worsen. Five million people are already suffering from acute food shortages. I call in this open Chamber on all donors to seek in their pockets funds and assistance for the humanitarian response plan and call on Somali authorities to facilitate humanitarian access in order to prevent humanitarian disaster.

Finally, we believe that AMISOM remains crucially important for the stabilization of Somalia. We commend the troop-contributing countries and their soldiers and pay tribute to their efforts and sacrifice. Sweden and the European Union are and remain committed to supporting AMISOM, both financially and politically, but funding gaps must be dealt with. We join the African Union in calling on the international community at large to assist, while recognizing the need to find more sustainable means. However, achieving sustainable peace and stabilization goes beyond AMISOM; the development of a credible and capable Somali national security sector must be a priority within a well-coordinated and comprehensive approach to security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I have the pleasure to give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia.

Mr. Omer (Somalia): I want to also join you, Mr. President, and Mr. Michael Keating and Ambassador Madeira in sending our sincere condolences to the Kenyan and Somali families and the military staff and civilians who perished last night in the Juba Valley in a senseless, barbaric and un-Islamic attack. Moreover, it is wrong to use of our children as human bombs. This has happened too often, so let us all condemn it and make sure that it does not happen again.

At the outset, on behalf of the Somali Government, I wish to congratulate the new members of this organ on their election. I commend in particular the Swedish Government on its stewardship and leadership of the Security Council this month.

It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council on the important matter of Somalia's progress and the remaining challenges today. The members of the Security Council, with many other partner nations within the United Nations, continue to play a vital role in our national progress alongside our people and the Government, both multilaterally and bilaterally.

It is important to remember that, since I last addressed the Security Council, in September 2016 (see S/PV.7778), all members have taken the opportunity to visit Somalia and witness our national progress. The members of Security Council met with the President in Mogadishu. That was followed by further high-level visits from many Security Council membes and Members of the United Nations, which serve as the best evidence of constructive engagement, strengthening partnerships and Somalia and Somalis determinedly overcoming the difficult nightmare of the past.

I must stress and reiterate that, in many ways, Somalia has some key remaining challenges to overcome going forward, as Mr. Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, made clear in his briefing. But, as he also acknowledged, the overall progress our country is making is tangible, sustainable and historic. The progress I am referring to, and which I will discuss in greater detail, is political, social, economic and security related. In Somalia's case, as in most post-conflict States, those components must go hand in hand for there to be sustainable development. Furthermore, while the term "progress" can be easily open to interpretation according to individual and group expectations, we can safely say that, by all measurements, progress in Somalia is clear and self-evident. Somalis cannot hide from or wish away their

difficult past, as it clearly has impacted on all of us heavily. But there is also no denying our collective ambition to never return to it.

The Federal Government of Somalia and the Somali people, through sacrifice, self-assessment and tough negotiations, have finally set sail in the direction of peace and progress. Somalia is among Africa's first democracies and we are once again in the process of completing our first successful national elections in decades. So far, all parliamentarians from both the Upper and Lower House have been elected by constituents they represent. In turn, they have elected speakers for both institutions, paving the way for the presidential election scheduled for 8 February.

For the first time in history, a transformation has taken place in female political representation, as was underlined by my siste Asha Gelle Dirie. When it comes to participation, an important precedent has been set for women's political mobilization. We are proud to say that we have achieved almost 26 per cent women representation in our Parliament, which is an increase of more than 70 per cent and a substantial improvement from what it was in 2012.

In addition to the increase in female lawmakers, a larger number of young and talented Members of Parliament have been elected, including from the diaspora. While the election was not yet one person, one vote, it is a remarkable improvement over 2012, when 135 elders selected the entire Parliament. The current process of indirect elections allowed a total of 14,025 delegates, selected by traditional elders and representing all groups within society, to vote for competing candidates. More impressive, the voting was not Mogadishu-centered, like in 2012, but took place all over the newly formed regional member states, including Hir-Shabelle, which was finally established.

Following on from the voting, what is most symbolic is how peacefully and quickly titles were transferred and how the Somali people and politicians embraced the spirit and rules of democracy. Where in 2012, the entire process of elections was in the hands of 135 tribal elders guided by an electoral commission, today it is overseenoverseen by a Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team at the national level and six state-level indirect electoral implementation teams in the regions, which have been vocal throughout the elections.

Despite the mentioned successes in the electoral process, there were challenges too, which provided us with many valuable lessons for the future. Those challenges, flowing from the very ambition of holding elections in a recovering post-conflict State that has only had an internationally recognized Government since 2012, led to a delay in the electoral process, which will be concluded by 8 February. Among the key reasons for the delay was the process of understanding and implementing an electoral system that was adopted by the Somali Government on the part of the Federal member states and candidates.

Going forward, the process of planning and executing one person, one vote in 2020 must begin immediately. Furthermore, to guide the entire process, we will partner with all stakeholders and complete the constitutional review process, strengthen enabling democratic institutions and ratify and implement the laws that underpin it all, such as the political party laws. It is a fact of history and process that democratization is not easy. It is a marathon in tough terrain rather than a race in a perfectly designed stadium with guiding tracks, perfect lighting and enthusiastic fans. However, we in Somalia are committed to our national development — and hence to governing ourselves fairly and democratically.

Since our previous meeting at the Security Council (see S/PV.7778), security has continued to improve. As I informed members then, I can confidently repeat that, due to the courage and sacrifices of the Somali National Army and the troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Al-Shabaab has been defeated militarily. Despite the headlines and the — at times — irresponsible discussions in some quarters of the international media of its resurgence, Al-Shabaab has been reduced to carrying out primarily opportunistic attacks against soft targets and innocent civilians. The most recent example of this was the attack on Wednesday on the Dayah Hotel in Mogadishu, in which innocent people lost their lives and many more were injured because of pointless and cruel violence. While our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims of this and other evil attacks, both in Somalia and across the world, we are winning the war against Al-Shabaab. Many of their leaders either have been killed or have defected to the Government, and their desperate tactics are the best evidence of their diminishing capabilities and moral bankruptcy.

Permanently defeating Al-Shabaab is pertinent to the progress of Somalia and the overall fight against international terrorism. No one is insulated from terrorism, and the violent ending of last year as well as the beginning of this year, in as diverse places as Berlin, Istanbul and Mogadishu, are clear illustrations of this. We are therefore proud and privileged to be working with valued partners, including members of the Security Council, in diverse and effective ways to destroy the last remaining pockets of terror on our soil.

The Somali Government is proud of the collective efforts of the Somali security forces and their partners in AMISOM, which allow the Somali people to live peacefully. I pay my respects and convey the gratitude of my country for their sterling efforts and success, which has come at a deadly price on many occasions. Their sacrifices will never be forgotten, and their memory will spur on our national and regional progress.

Despite the courage of AMISOM soldiers in Somalia, our national ambition is to nurture and develop a well-trained, -equipped and -funded Somali National Army and police force that protects its citizens and safeguards the progress of the nation for the betterment of our people, our neighbours and the world. We are thankful to all partners that are actively assisting us to work towards and realize this fundamental goal.

The fight against international terrorism is difficult and long. This is simply because we are dealing with new phenomena, which include greater use of technology to radicalize people and new techniques of terror, such as misleading young children to blow themselves up. For those present who wish to know about the latest such incident, two young people aged 16 years old blew themselves up in Mogadishu. There is no textbook that teaches us how to deal with this, and therefore we must share knowledge, adapt and devise sustainable and diverse solutions to overcome this evil. In the case of Somalia, we have completed our national countering violent extremism strategy, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with all Member States on this critical issue.

Despite our solid political and socioeconomic ambitions and gains, I would like to reiterate, as I did in my September 2016 presentation to this organ, the importance of the remaining challenges to development in Somalia, such as investment, education, jobs and skills. These critical components of development must accompany the physical security we seek, otherwise it will prove difficult to overcome the challenges of radicalization, illegal migration and the tragedy of wasted talent and lives on the high seas. The Somali Government has adopted a national development plan, which was completed last year, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We kindly ask all partners to support the clearly specified Somali priorities set out within it.

I would like to turn your attention, Mr. President, to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in my Somalia, which is poised to worsen as drought conditions extend beyond Puntland and Somaliland to areas in the south. The drought is expected to deepen, as the current rainy season sharply underperformed and it will be another four months before the next rainy season. According to the United Nations, as previously stated, there are now 5 million people facing acute food shortages, including more than 50,000 children who are severely malnourished. We appeal to the Council, the donor community and the public and private sectors to urgently heed the multiple urgent warnings by United Nations specialized agencies and to help us address the pressing lifesaving and livelihood-support needs facing many Somali people, in particular women, children, the internally displaced persons and other vulnerable people. This appeal goes for the entire Horn of Africa, in particular parts of Ethiopia and of Kenya.

In conclusion, this is my third opportunity to address this important organ in my current role. Our Government has achieved many of the goals we set for ourselves in the past two years, but many challenges remain. It has been an honour to work with Council members' Governments on the key issues concerning both Somalia and the wider world, and I would like to thank everyone for their valuable support.

I would also like to stress the fact that the progress of Somalia is more than rhetorical; it is a reality evidenced by every member of the diaspora — and I include myself in this — and their desire to return, in the undefeatable spirit of the Somali people, to achieve progress and prosperity for themselves, their families and their nation. In looking at Somalia, therefore, please continue to see our courageous progress against great odds, our country's wonderful opportunities and untapped potential resources, as well as our determination to never return to the past, but to accelerate — peaceably and purposefully — to a better future.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7874

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 January 2017

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 7874th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 27 January 2017, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record.

"On 27 January 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7874th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

"The President invited Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Ladsous and Mr. Khare.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Ladsous, Mr. Khare, and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7875

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7875th meeting

Thursday, 2 February 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2017/73)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016) (S/2017/75)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-02809 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of February, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Council for the month of January. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Skoog and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2017/73)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016) (S/2017/75)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/73, which contains the thirteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), as well as to document S/2017/75, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: At the oustet, allow me to congratulate the new members of the Security Council on assuming their responsibilities, as well as to thank those that left the Council at the end of last year for their continuous strong support and cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Let me start my briefing by applauding the bravery of the Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces, the Peshmerga and tribal volunteers, as well as the endurance of the Iraqi people.

Three months after the Mosul liberation operation began, combat operations in the eastern part of Mosul have come to an end. The steady progress should not serve to conceal the fact that fighting has been — and will continue to be — a massive challenge, in particular inside the old city, in western Mosul. With significant support from international partners, especially the United States, Iraqi forces will remain engaged in complex urban operations. Yet the liberation operations in Iraq are coming to an end in the near foreseeable future. The days of the so-called caliphate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are numbered. I take this opportunity to honour the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the fight against the ISIL international terrorists for the sake of a free and united Iraq and in defence of human values shared by the world, as strong allies of the United States and a steadfast part of the international anti-ISIL coalition.

In the post-Da'esh period Iraq will need continuous substantial and substantive support and assistance from the international community, including its regional partners. Any abrupt scaling down of engagement or support would mean repeating mistakes of the past — mistakes that have had grave consequences for stability and security well beyond the borders of Iraq.

The humanitarian concept of operations adopted by the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces, prioritizes the protection of civilians in an unprecedented manner, in both the planning and the conduct of military operations, based on the lessons learned from mistakes of the previous liberation operations. The conduct of all security forces during the liberation operations has mitigated much, but not all, of the fear that existed among the population of Mosul prior to the operation. I note that UNAMI has received no evidence of any systematic or widespread violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law on the part of the security forces. Regrettably, however, criminal acts against civilians and prisoners of war still occur. There are most often quickly investigated, with measures taken to prevent such acts in the future. I furthermore

note that security screenings of civilians leaving areas controlled by Da'esh appear to be conducted in a transparent manner and in general observance of international standards. However, I express my concerns about disturbing reports of looting and destruction of civilian property and looting of humanitarian aid by armed groups operating in support of the Iraqi security forces, in particular by some local resistance groups.

Protecting civilians, avoiding steps that could incite sectarian tensions and preventing looting and revenge attacks in Mosul, but also in other liberated areas of the country, are of vital importance for winning the hearts and minds of the population. They constitute the first steps in the process of national and community-based reconciliation and in building a truly unified and united Iraq in which all its people will feel like equal citizens, be treated fairly and be protected by the State. I am pleased to note here that, during its meeting on 30 January, the Council of Representatives supported the Prime Minister's proposed candidates for the positions of Minister of Defence and Minister of the Interior. Swift action to agree on the selection and appointment of ministers for the remaining vacant posts, including the Ministers of Trade, Industry and Finance, is necessary.

The world will not forget the horrendous crimes committed by Da'esh. Provisional justice for the victims of human rights abuses and violations requires the re-establishment of the formal justice system, the effective and efficient documentation of violations and abuses and the establishment of non-formal justice mechanisms, such as truth-telling, specialized care and rehabilitation programmes for women and deradicalization programmes for children subjected to extremist indoctrination. There is also a need for broader intra- and inter-community dialogue on justice and human rights.

Attention should also be given to the needs of ethnic and religious minorities, which have been disproportionately affected by the conflict. Since 2003, Iraq has lost more than half of its ethnic and religious minority population. It is my fear that, without an adequate response, that process will continue even after the defeat of Da'esh. Special attention should therefore be paid to arrangements that address the specific security and other concerns of minorities in order to enable them to return to their homes.

Over the past months, I have engaged with the leadership of the Iraqi National Alliance, the largest parliamentary block, on the way forward in post-Da'esh Iraq. The National Alliance submitted its national settlement initiative to UNAMI on 30 October 2016. I welcome and support that encouraging move. The National Alliance initiative is a good starting point in the Iraqi-owned and -led, but United Nations-facilitated, process of national settlement and reconciliation and has already sparked a wave of interest in all sectors of Iraqi society. UNAMI is currently working with those groups, including the Sunni and Turkmen components, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, civil society, minority communities, tribal leaders and youth and women's groups, with the aim of soliciting their views and vision on how to build a post-ISIL united Iraq based on the principles of equality and citizenship. Let me emphasize that, for national reconciliation to succeed, it must be supported by grassroots initiatives. I am therefore glad to announce that UNAMI has launched a series of events under the theme "Iraq: Youth and Coexistence". The first such event took place on 28 January in Basra, where 120 youth from the four southern governorates participated.

After months of uncertainty regarding the timing of the Provincial Council elections in Iraq, Prime Minister Al Abadi announced on 17 January that governorate and district council elections were scheduled to be held on 16 September. It is now up to the Council of Representatives to urgently put in place the appropriate legal and institutional framework for those elections to take place. A clear and comprehensive electoral legal framework is essential to enable preparations by the Independent High Electoral Commission. I also encourage the Government of Iraq to provide the requisite funding for the Commission in order to facilitate its regulatory and operational planning and preparations for the elections. In addition, on 23 January, the Kurdistan Regional Government announced that the parliamentary and presidential elections would be conducted on 11 November.

During the previous phase of the Mosul operation, an estimated 825,000 civilians remained in their homes in the areas retaken by the Iraqi security forces. Nearly 190,000 people have been displaced since mid-October, far fewer than humanitarians had feared. Thirty thousand of those people have already returned to their homes and more are doing so every day. Although the military campaign to oust ISIL from Iraq is nearly

won, the humanitarian crisis is expected to continue for months, if not years. In December 2016, humanitarian partners presented an advanced summary of the 2017 humanitarian response plan. At least $985 million is required this year to reach the 5.8 million most vulnerable Iraqis. Of that total $331 million is being sought specifically for the Mosul response.

A great deal is already being done. More than 1.4 million displaced Iraqis have returned to their homes, including 1 million in the past 12 months throughout the country. The United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization is currently operational in 21 liberated towns and districts. Hundreds of thousands of people have returned to the cities and districts facilitated by that activity.

Allow me now to turn the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. The Government of Iraq has shown determination to pursue the important work of locating missing persons. Through the proactive efforts of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, the number of witnesses coming forward to give information has increased dramatically. Field visits and excavation work continue, both in Iraq and in Kuwait.

Separately, efforts in recovering Kuwait's missing patrimony are ongoing. Over 6,000 Kuwaiti books have been located and itemized from the libraries of the Kufa and Babil Universities, and are being prepared for an official handover to Kuwait. Yet time is not on our side. As time passes, it makes locating burial sites all the more difficult. We owe it to the families of the deceased to continue supporting Iraq in this humanitarian process and to continue employing a multidimensional and innovative approach, which Iraq requires to honour and fulfil its international obligations in this area.

The President: I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the delegation of Ukraine on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Sweden and his entire team for their outstanding management of the work of the Council in January — Ambassador Skoog and his staff have indeed set the bar very high. I also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing.

It is clear that Iraq still faces several major humanitarian, political, economic and security challenges, but the main one, without a doubt, is the fight against terrorism. Uruguay recognizes the arduous work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, which, in close coordination with the Iraqi Government, have been carrying out very important and effective work to address the various crises affecting the country.

We reiterate that combating the terrorist scourge should take place in the framework of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and must be coordinated within the United Nations. We also support the efforts made by the Iraqi Government, with the support of the global coalition to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, in the fight against the grave threat posed by the Islamic State to Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and its civilian population.

We need to underscore the fact that Iraqi authorities have placed the highest priority on the protection of civilians and on achieving an immediate response to the humanitarian emergency in the context of their military offensive in Mosul. We are obviously concerned about the situation of civilians who are trapped in Mosul, in particular the most vulnerable groups, and the fact that Da'esh is using civilians as human shields, which is one more example of their utter cowardice.

We urge the parties to the conflict to respect and protect civilians, in particular women, children, disabled persons and older persons, and to respect human rights and allow access to emergency assistance, in accordance with international humanitarian law. It is of particular concern that there are now more than 160,000 persons who have been displaced as a result of the fighting, and there could soon be even more.

Repairing civilian infrastructure, the normal provision of services and the gradual return of the internally displaced to their homes must be priorities following the liberation of Mosul. It continues to be clear that military operations alone will not eliminate the threat of terrorism in Iraq. Iraqi political leaders must overcome their divisions and mistrust and reach an agreement on a single vision for national reconciliation. Without such a vision it will be very difficult in the

future to heal the wounds that continue to drain the life out of the Iraqi people.

The President: The representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by wishing you, Sir, and your team every success in presiding over the work of the Security Council during the month of February. I would also like to echo your comments, Sir, and of those who spoke before me, in congratulating the Swedish presidency on its work during the month of January.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia recognizes and encourages the brave and determined work being carried out by the Iraqi people and Government in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham and terrorism and underscores that the provision of humanitarian assistance that the Iraqi Government has ensured in all its military tasks is in accordance with international humanitarian law. At the same time, Bolivia reiterates its vigorous condemnation of the terrorism and violence that have been wrought upon women and children in Mosul. Similarly, the Plurinational State of Bolivia recognizes the efforts and will of the Iraqi people to reach a historic political and social agreement by consensus and with mutual respect among all parties involved that establishes and strengthens peace, in accordance with respect for the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

We add our voice to the calls for support for the rebuilding of hospitals, schools and State universities destroyed during the conflict, as well as for the requests for support to carry out electoral processes in various regional Governments, in particular with regard to the biometric voter registry. We believe that the international community must recognize the efforts carried out by the Iraqi Government and, in particular the Iraqi people, in the common struggle against terrorism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Republic of Ukraine on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your efforts to ensure transparency. I would also like to congratulate the Kingdom of Sweden on its presidency of the Council in January. We are pleased to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). We appreciate his efforts, both in Baghdad and in New York, and those of his team.

We would also like to welcome Mrs. Nikki Haley, who is assuming her position on the Security Council. We wish her every success. We are keen to work on issues of common interest.

The Government of Iraq highly commends the sacrifices made by Iraqi forces under the joint supervision of the international alliance. We welcome the successful liberation of Mosul. The western part of that city has been fully liberated, and that includes 87 neighbourhoods. Iraqi forces are completing the preparations for taking over the eastern part of the city. Mr. Al Abadi, who is President of the Governing Council of Ministers, has signed a memorandum to launch reconstruction projects in the various liberated neighbourhoods and to undertake demining. That will open the way for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and for the provision of services to the Iraqi people so that life can resume as normal.

More than 2,000 Iraqi families have been able to return to their homes in the western part of the city, which has been freed from Da'esh criminals. Their return is continuing following the removal of explosives and mines. We also thank the local population for their active participation in the cleanup of the streets in the liberated neighbourhoods.

The President of the Council of Ministers and Head of the Armed Forces has issued urgent decrees, which are to be implemented immediately. Those decrees go to the relevant authorities to ensure security and the provision of emergency aid and shelter to those displaced from Mosul. This is based on the Ninawa liberation humanitarian plan, which was a joint operation for the liberation of Ninawa. They have informed the ministry responsible for IDPs and immigration on the expected number of IDPs before beginning the liberation of the eastern side of Mosul so that the necessary steps can be taken with regard to providing shelter and emergency assistance.

The Ministry of Trade has quickly provided food in the liberated areas, in cooperation with the local

Governments of Ninawa. I am pleased to inform the Security Council that the Council of Representatives of Iraq intends to approve the candidates for the positions of the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior. This will allow the success achieved on the ground to be consolidated.

The Government of Iraq welcomes the joint communiqué adopted following the visit to Iraq of the Head of the Turkish Government, Mr. Binali Yıldırım, particularly as concerns the Bashiqa camp in Iraq. The communiqué also refers to the need for respect for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, and we look forward to its implementation as soon as possible with a view to strengthening bilateral relations in various areas, including the combat against terrorism, so as to ensure security and stability along the border between the two countries.

My Government calls upon all countries worldwide to implement resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015), in particular with respect to putting an end to the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. The Security Council sanctions Committees must shoulder their responsibilities fully under their prerogatives in order to neutralize these terrorist groups and dry up their sources of funding. By this I mean follow-up with respect to those States that provide financial support and arms to terrorist groups, including Da'esh, thereby enabling them to engage in the trafficking of Iraqi oil and Iraqi archaeological treasures.

Iraq welcomes the actions of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, under the chairmanship of Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, which have provided Iraq with the means to combat terrorism, including during the coordination meeting held in Baghdad in the presence of UNAMI. In order to coordinate international efforts aimed at providing technical support to Iraq in the combat against terrorism, we urge donors and international organizations to provide the relevant technical support. We welcome UNAMI's efforts in this regard, particularly its work to promote national reconciliation and enhance the role played by young people, as reflected in the youth conference held in Basra, to which Mr. Ján Kubiš referred in his briefing.

The Government and the people of Iraq would like to thank all of the States of the international coalition, in particular the United States of America and the States of the European Union, as well as other States that are not part of the coalition, for the efforts undertaken to combat terrorism, particularly the provision of military and logistical support to Iraqi security forces, within the context of strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and in cooperation with the security forces.

We welcome the election and inauguration of Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States. However, we deeply regret the executive order of 27 January last, which includes restrictions on citizens of seven countries travelling to the United States, including Iraqis. This order is affecting a friendly, allied State that is linked with the United States by a strategic partnership. Given that it comes at a time when our brave fighters have achieved major progress in combating Da'esh in Mosul, we call on the United States Government to rethink its position. In this regard, we reiterate our resolve to enhance the strategic partnership between our two countries and to broaden the possibilities for cooperation, particularly in the combat against terrorism.

Iraq thanks and attaches great importance to the efforts of those friendly countries that have worked to restore stability and ensure reconstruction in those areas retaken from terrorist groups linked to Da'esh, with a view to alleviating the humanitarian crisis affecting displaced persons. This requires demining and the provision of basic services and employment to the local population. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in supporting displaced persons, and we call upon all States to provide funding in that respect.

For our part, we are doing everything in our power to enhance our relations with neighbouring Arab states, particularly Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey; we have a close relationship also with the Syrian Government. In the context of enhancing our brotherly ties to Kuwait, the high-level joint ministerial commission met in Baghdad on 28 December 2016, under the joint chairmanship of Mr. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, and Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait. At that meeting, a number of issues of common interest were discussed, and in this regard the Iraqi Government reaffirms its commitment to sparing no effort to achieve progress on the issue of disappeared Kuwaiti citizens and Kuwaiti archives.

The joint commission as well as the national commissions are interviewing witnesses to determine the fate of disappeared persons, not only Kuwaiti citizens but also nationals of other countries. The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have stepped up their efforts to disseminate information on this issue via television, satellite stations and Government publications in order to obtain testimony and reliable information, with a view to carrying out visits on the ground and achieve concrete results. A number of technical meetings have been held, and excavations have taken place in a number of regions; 158 trenches were dug in Karbala recently, in the presence of witnesses, but no human remains were found. The Iraqi Ministry of Defence is providing the funding necessary for 2017 so as to ensure that excavations can continue in many areas, including Khamisiyah, Radwaniyah, Ayn_al-Tamr, Sulaymaniyah and Salman Pak.

The Iraqi Government attaches great importance to the sincere relations that link us to the brotherly Kuwaiti State. We greatly appreciate the tireless support from that brotherly country, in particular the provision of ready-made schools in liberated areas, which allows students to return to classes until their permanent schools have been rebuilt.

We welcome the efforts and the good offices of Russia, Iran and Turkey to reach a comprehensive Syrian settlement that can be accepted by all Syrian parties. We thank them for the efforts they are undertaking to eradicate terrorist groups in Syria, to put an end to regional and international support for those groups and to put an end to the recruitment of more terrorists. We also thank them for their efforts to ensure respect for the sovereignty of Syria, and to assist that country in such a way that it can be freed from the scourge of terrorism, destruction, death and displacement, thereby ensuring that stability and security can finally return to the region.

We would like to thank Kazakhstan for the efforts that country is making to ensure that the dialogue is successful. We also wish to thank its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, for his efforts to ensure the principles of peace and to reconcile the various points of views of the Syrian people under the auspices of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we extend our sincere thanks to Special Representative Kubiš for the efforts that he has continuously made on behalf of Iraq. We also wish to thank his team for its valuable advice to the Iraqi Government. Finally, we thank UNAMI for the efforts it has undertaken to ensure that Iraq is unified, stable and free of terrorists.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7876

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7876th meeting
Thursday, 2 February 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Thöresson
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ambassador Apakan, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Kyiv.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Two days ago, the Security Council discussed the deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine and succeeded in adopting a press statement (SC/12700) on the subject. It became the first document of the Council on the situation in and around Ukraine in almost two years.

Unfortunately, despite the Council's call for an immediate return to a ceasefire regime, the situation in Avdiivka and other areas of eastern Ukraine remains tense, with strong signs of a possible further escalation. Therefore, today's discussion is meant to contribute to the settlement of the conflict. If we find common ground, I suggest we consider the possibility of adopting a draft presidential statement. If the Council agrees with such a proposal, in the coming days we may embark upon drafting it to reflect the main elements of this briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: The conflict in Ukraine will soon enter its fourth year. Since the Department of Political Affairs last briefed the Security Council on the situation in eastern Ukraine, on 28 April 2016 (see S/PV.7683), fighting has continued unabated, with only short periods of respite. Almost 10,000 people have been killed — Ukrainian armed forces, civilians and members of armed groups — and more than 23,000 have been injured since the beginning of the conflict, according to the human rights Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine; over 2,000 of those killed were civilians.

Since 7 January, and in particular over the past few days, we have seen a dangerous intensification of the conflict. On 1 February, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission reported over 10,000 explosions in the Donetsk region over 24 hours, the highest number of violations yet recorded by the Mission. While the most serious clashes in the past few days predominantly hit the Avdiivka, Yasnuvata and Donetsk airport areas, heavy fighting has also been reported near Mariupol, Popasna and the Svitlodarsk/Debeltseve areas, both in Government- and non-Government-controlled territories. The entire length of the contact line has seen a serious escalation of hostilities, and there is still a risk of further deterioration of the situation.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission has also registered frequent use of heavy weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements, such as multiple launch rocket systems, including in the areas designated for disengagement, as per the 21 September 2016 framework decision of the Trilateral Contact Group relating to the disengagement of forces and hardware. There are reports of civilian casualties, including at least four deaths since the escalation on 28 January, and heavy losses among combatants on both sides. The human rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine also recorded damage to civilian houses and a school in populated areas of Avdiivka, which raises serious concerns about possible violations of international humanitarian law by all sides.

There are now reports of clashes that are directly endangering civilian crossing points, residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure, such as water purification plants and delivery systems, power lines and heating supply lines. Ensuring the urgent disengagement of forces at all checkpoints across the contact line would greatly improve the security of the population in the conflict-affected areas, where more than 20,000 people cross the contact line daily. Hundreds of thousands of civilians on both sides of the contact line are still at risk of losing all access to

heating, water and electricity, bringing the spectre of further displacement close.. That is particularly worrying given the frigid winter temperatures in the region at present.

There are also real threats of serious environmental disasters should any of the major chemical-waste storage locations in the area be shelled. As of yesterday, thousands of inhabitants in Avdiivka, including children, were reportedly at risk of being evacuated. The combatants must stop the shelling in cities such as Avdiivka, on both sides of the contact line, and enable basic services to be restored. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, will shortly provide further updates on the humanitarian situation on the ground.

We welcome the prompt statement (SC/12700) issued by the Security Council on 31 January on the deterioration of the situation in the Donetsk region. The Secretary-General has expressed deep concern about the high level of military readiness and the recently intensified fighting, which is having an increasingly serious impact on the civilian population in the conflict areas. He has called on all parties to halt all hostilities immediately, fully observe the ceasefire, allow immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population, facilitate full and safe access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission so that it can report on the situation on the ground, and renew serious efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict. He particularly underlines how imperative it is that all sides take every possible measure to protect civilians and refrain from any action that could be seen as provocative or might escalate tensions.

In just a few days, the intensity of the hostilities around the Avdiivka-Yasnuvota-Donetsk airport areas has risen to levels that the Special Monitoring Mission has never before recorded in the area. The escalation demonstrates how precarious the situation continues to be and how suddenly and abruptly the security situation can deteriorate. The statement agreed on at yesterday's meeting in Minsk between the Trilateral Contact Group and representatives from various areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions lays down the urgent measures the sides should take, not only in the area under discussion but along the entire contact line, in order to prevent further ceasefire violations that could in turn spiral out of control. That is a positive development, but the test will be in the implementation of the measures. The pattern of successive ceasefire agreements broken by fresh violence has left civilians caught in the crossfire and trapped in suffering. With every new day of fighting, the conflict becomes more entrenched and more difficult to resolve. There is no military solution to this conflict.

Despite the commendable efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy four, the recent intensification of the conflict coincides with a period of relative stagnation in the diplomatic processes designed to find a peaceful solution and ensure the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The international community must remain constructively and actively engaged, however, if we are to prevent this crisis from becoming a catastrophe. In that regard, there is a pressing need to revitalize the negotiation process without delay.

The United Nations continues to strongly support the efforts being made in the Normandy four and Trilateral Contact Group frameworks and of the OSCE chairship in Ukraine. We commend the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which is carrying out essential work under extremely difficult circumstances in the conflict areas. The United Nations calls on both sides to lift all restrictions on the Special Monitoring Mission's freedom of movement and to immediately end all use of force or threats against the Mission's monitors. We welcomed the January visits of Mr. Sebastian Kurz, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, to Ukraine and the Russian Federation, and hope that his engagement, along with other ongoing efforts, will bear fruit. The United Nations stands ready to support those efforts. I look forward to hearing today from Ambassador Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, about his assessment of the latest developments the ground.

It has been almost two years since 12 February 2015, when the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements was signed in Minsk, and in turn endorsed by the Security Council's adoption, on 17 February, of resolution 2202 (2015). That remains the foundation based on which we, the international community, have committed to seeking lasting peace in eastern Ukraine. I urge the Council to continue those efforts with renewed vigour.

In accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the United Nations remains committed to supporting a peaceful resolution

of the conflict in a manner that fully upholds the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. The United Nations priority continues to be on supporting the peace efforts in Ukraine led by the OSCE and ensuring the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The parties themselves, however, have the main responsibility to work constructively to that end.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr Apakan.

Mr. Apakan: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the security situation in eastern Ukraine. I am reporting to the Council today on the significant escalation of violence that has taken place in the past few days. The Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has seen a sharp intensification in fighting in the Avdiivka-Yasnyuvata-Donetsk airport area. That latest upsurge comes after months of sustained ceasefire violations, particularly in five hotspots in eastern Ukraine, including in the Svitlodarsk and Debaltseve areas, Horlivka, in areas east of Mariupol, around Shyrokyne, and in Popasna, Pervomaiske and Troitske, in the Luhansk region. Sporadic fighting has continued, with several spikes in violence recorded from November through January.

Today the fighting in that triangular area is in its fifth day. The tension levels witnessed have increased during that period and the ceasefire violations are becoming more frequent and severe. Since 29 January, the intensity of the fighting in and around Avdiivka has been greater than in any similar period in recent months. On 31 January, the Special Monitoring Mission recorded thousands of explosions in Donetsk caused by incoming and outgoing mortar and artillery fire, including from multiple-launch rocket systems. On 1 February, there were almost 10,000 explosions in the Donetsk region. Today the situation continues to be tense and volatile. This is the highest number of explosions that the Mission has ever recorded. Most were in the Avdiivka and Yasnyuvata areas. The Special Monitoring Mission has also registered a steep increase in the use of all types of weapons regulated by the Minsk agreements, and the use of Grad multiple-launch rocket systems, mortars and artillery is particularly worrying. The use of tanks has also been observed.

The sides' indiscriminate use of proscribed weapons has resulted in civilian casualties and considerable damage to civilian homes and essential infrastructure. The conditions for civilians who have remained in Avdiivka have reached emergency levels. The town lost electricity when power lines in the area were damaged. In the meantime, civilians, including the most vulnerable, have been left without heat in sub-zero winter temperatures. The Avdiivka coke factory, which was providing the area with its main source of heating, has lost its power and water supplies. Repair crews have difficulty conducting repairs owing to the security situation. Efforts to ensure access in order to repair power lines and restore electricity to the coke factory and the Donetsk filtration station are ongoing. The Donetsk filtration station supplies water to the population on both sides of the contact line, and its protection is of the utmost importance. Further damage to Donetsk and other water filtration stations in the region could leave large parts of the Donetsk region without water.

All of those factors demonstrate a blatant disregard for the obligations undertaken by the signatories of the Minsk agreements. Instead of the disengagement of forces and hardware, we see the engagement of forces and a full range of hardware in areas where they are prohibited by the Minsk agreements. The Special Monitoring Mission's safe access and ability to conduct effective monitoring and verification continues to be restricted. The Mission needs full, safe and unhindered access.

At the moment, our teams and monitors are facilitating local ceasefires in the area, in coordination with the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination — the joint military centre for Russian and Ukrainian officers. That window of opportunity, along with the ceasefires, as unstable as they may be, helped to allow repair crews to access the damaged sites. Those efforts are still under way. Local ceasefires show that, if they are willing to, the sides can stop fighting.

Allow me to reiterate that the developments in the Avdiivka/Yasnuvata and Donetsk airport areas are of great concern. In that context, I welcome yesterday's joint statement by the Trilateral Contact Group appealing for strict adherence to a full and comprehensive cessation of fire, withdrawal into storage sites of all weapons regulated by the Minsk agreements, safe and secure access for members of the Special Monitoring Mission in accordance with the Mission's mandate, and, finally,

the facilitation of efforts aimed at restoring water, electricity and heating supplies, including by way of the repair of infrastructure. I would like once again to say to the Security Council that a ceasefire is a basic requirement. We call for the immediate cessation of fighting.

The withdrawal of heavy weapons is another imperative. I should also mention that work is ongoing in the disengagement areas. In that context, I must say that the verification of heavy weapons is an important step that we are trying to achieve through monitoring, verification and reporting. It is also imperative that the Special Monitoring Mission be given immediate safe and unhindered access to the affected areas in order to verify that sides are complying with their obligations on the ceasefire and the withdrawal of weapons. I would also reiterate that the sides should try to prioritize the protection of civilians and the repair of infrastructure, which is also an immediate need.

We will also continue to monitor the humanitarian situation, which remains a matter of deep concern. Violence on such a scale, involving the loss of life, is unacceptable, and the protection of civilians must be paramount. Access to shelter, water, heat and medical care is limited in many areas. In that respect, the Special Monitoring Mission works closely with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The Mission will continue to implement its mandate with impartiality and in close cooperation with all sides, in the context of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We continue to support the implementation of the Minsk agreements, and thereby contribute to efforts towards peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Apakan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and His Excellency Mr. Apakan for their briefings. I am also grateful for this opportunity to join them in briefing the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

Over three years into the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in what has become yet another protracted humanitarian crisis, we are now faced with a significant deterioration in the situation following the sudden and recent escalation in violence. That escalation on both sides of the contact line in Donetsk oblast near Avdiivka and Donetsk city has claimed the lives of four civilians, all women, since 18 January, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. According to the United Nations team on the ground, it is resulting in widespread fear, panic and a real struggle to survive by civilians. We call on all parties to immediately cease all hostilities in order to prevent a further loss of life and further unacceptable human suffering.

The current escalation in violence is causing severe damage to critical infrastructure — water, electricity and heating. Combined with low winter temperatures, the result is a deteriorating humanitarian situation. Today temperatures are -10°C but, -20°C is not unheard of at this time of the year. Adequate shelter, heating and access to water are therefore essential to people's survival. Shelling has damaged electricity and water systems, with a knock-on effect on the heating supply; once damaged, it could take days, or weeks, for systems to restart. For civilians living on both sides of the front line, that means they are not only traumatized, living a precarious and dangerous existence, but damage to critical services is making survival an issue. We are also concerned about the reported presence of heavy weapons in urban areas, which further heightens the risk to civilians' lives.

For example, critical water and electricity systems in Avdiivka, a front-line town in Government-controlled areas, were damaged by the the recent violence on 29 and 30 January. The United Nations and other humanitarian partners joined a Government-led assessment team to the town on 1 February, and are working to ensure that critical needs are met in support of the Government. That is not without risk. For example, two technical teams sent to repair infrastructure were promised a ceasefire for a few hours on 1 February in order to carry out their work, but were subjected to small-arms fire in non-government controlled areas and, as a result, were forced to abandon their work. A similar incident took place earlier today. The arrival of powerful generators on 31 January in Avdiivka provided some temporary respite to 17,000 people, including 2,500 children, but that is not sufficient. Unless repairs are made, the power that keeps the heating system functioning in Avdiivka cannot be fully restored. The result could be displacement on a large scale.

Avdiivka is not alone. Approximately 1 million people in non-government controlled areas in Donetsk city were without water or heating for 24 hours following the shelling. A repair team has managed to

fix some power lines, thereby managing to preserve the city's heating systems and avoid a major catastrophe. Elsewhere, the 500,000 inhabitants of Mariupol are now reliant on a backup reservoir after the water main on which the city depends developed a massive leak. It will take several days — once hostilities are over — to ensure the area is demined and heavy machinery can access the area to carry out repairs. Unfortunately, shelling could be heard again last night in Donetsk and in other areas along the contact line.

I welcome yesterday's statement of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk, which called for not only strict adherence to a full and comprehensive cessation of fire but also the facilitation of humanitarian efforts aimed at the restoration of water, electricity and heating supplies, including through the repair of infrastructure. I also acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Ukraine and the de facto authorities to provide critical heating and water for those most at risk, but I highlight that that is not enough. On 31 January, the Government of Ukraine appealed to international organizations to prepare to support civilian evacuees from Avdiivka should it be necessary. The United Nations and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stand ready to lend their support.

If hostilities continue, we may also face a serious environmental crisis. Damage to the phenol plant near the village of Novgorodske means that waste chemicals, including deadly sulfuric acid and formaldehyde, are now at critical levels. Leakage into the surrounding land and the Severskiy Donets River would have disastrous humanitarian consequences in a highly industrialized part of Europe. Similarly, there is a real risk at present that damage to water facilities could have further deadly consequences for the population living in the surrounding areas, with the potential leak of chlorine gas, which is routinely stored at such facilities.

This latest escalation in violence is exacerbating the ongoing needs of an estimated 3.8 million civilians who continue to bear the brunt of this protracted conflict and who require various degrees of humanitarian assistance. There are 700,000 more people in need this year as compared to those identified in the 2016 humanitarian response plan. More than 60 per cent of those in need — approximately 2.3 million people — reside in non-Government controlled areas. Furthermore, over 70 per cent of people in need are the elderly, women and children. Those demographic groups are particularly vulnerable and must be accessed immediately with lifesaving assistance and protection interventions. When I visited Luhansk and Donetsk just over a year ago, I met an octogenarian woman living in one room in the bombed-out ruins of her house, whose son had been killed in the cracked remains of what was once her front door when he just happened to be visiting to check on her safety and a bomb came down on him — an innocent non-combatant nipping back in the lunch hour from his market store. While tending to her rambling rose bush growing up the charred remains of her house, she told me of her unconscionable grief, of the cold she endures and that she would only light a camp fire during the night, as she was afraid that any smoke during the day would allow others to target her location. It was truly heartbreaking. That is the reality for so many civilians caught in this conflict, trapped by the fighting with minimal shelter, critical services cut-off and in desperate need of assistance and building repair materials to prevent death or injury by either the violence or the elements.

While some humanitarian response efforts continue, since July 2015 the de facto authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk have imposed undue bureaucratic restrictions that are severely affecting humanitarian access. That is in contradiction to their commitments under article 7 of the Minsk full package of measures, as well as their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. Few partners are officially allowed to operate in those areas and, on 25 November 2016, the international NGO People in Need — the last international NGO to have access — was summarily ejected from Donetsk non-Government controlled areas, depriving 140,000 people of immediate lifesaving assistance. The United Nations repeats its appeal to all parties to guarantee secure and unimpeded access for United Nations and humanitarian partners to all people in need, wherever they may be.

Finally, Government-imposed bureaucratic impediments, particularly in relation to the ban on commercial trade and the importation of food and medicines across the contact line, remain a serious constraint to alleviating the humanitarian crisis. In addition, the suspension of social payments by the Government has severely affected hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

I am alarmed about the turn that this conflict has taken and about the increasing toll it has on the civilian population. As the humanitarian situation in Ukraine deteriorates, increasing numbers of people are at risk

and in need — their resilience eroded and their hope fading. The inability to reach a political solution to this crisis is resulting in further civilian casualties, damage to critical infrastructure and more human suffering. This suffering will continue until this conflict comes to an end once and for all.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ukraine.

I thank the briefers for the updated information they provided on the attack on the town of Avdiivka, in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, by the Russian occupying forces and their proxies, which led to a humanitarian emergency in the area.

Ukraine continues to be fully committed to implementing the Minsk agreements in their entirety. The President of Ukraine has stressed on many occasions that there is no military solution in the Donbas. The Ukrainian Government is sharply focused on peaceful and diplomatic means in that regard. Ukrainian forces continue to respect the ceasefire. They have strict orders to open a fire only in response to the attacks and assault actions of Russia-backed militants.

On the contrary, Russia, as the party to the conflict in Donbas, and its proxies have blatantly violated the Minsk agreements from the very beginning. They have continued their attacks and occupied several Ukrainian towns and localities. As of now, Russian proxies occupy about 1,700 square kilometres, going far beyond the contact line agreed in Minsk on 19 September 2014.

Before the crisis in Avdiivka, there was the battle for Debaltseve two years ago, which was captured by Russian forces immediately after the Minsk summit on 12 February 2015, contrary to decisions taken by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France.

In the early hours of Sunday, 29 January, the Russian army and its proxies began massive artillery attacks on Avdiivka and its suburbs from residential areas in Donetsk and Yasynuvata, which are under the control of the Russia-led terrorists, and sent assault units to storm positions of the Ukrainian armed forces. The Russian forces used Grad multiple-rocket launch systems, tanks, 152-millimetre and 122-millimetre artillery, and 120-millimetre and 82-millimetre mortars. All those weapons are forbidden under the Minsk agreements. On 29 January alone, the Ukrainian positions were shelled nearly 400 times.

The shelling intensified on 30 and 31 January, when civilian infrastructure sites were also targeted. As a result, the Donetsk water filtration plant and the Avdiivka coke plant, which provides heat for Avdiivka, are now without electricity. The city is left without water, electricity or heat. The current temperature in Avdiivka is -18°C. Without central heat, civilians will not survive. Sixteen thousand people ended up without water, electricity or heat, including 2,000 children. Just imagine: 2,000 children without heat at -18°C. Ukrainian emergency services prepared to evacuate people from Avdiivka.

Numerous attempts by the Ukrainian services to repair damaged infrastructure were consistently blocked until 1 February by the Russia-led terrorists, who continued shelling, and by the Russian part of the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC), which were unreasonably delayed in providing security guarantees necessary to reach the destroyed objects.

According to information that we just received 15 minutes before the start of this briefing, the separatist forces resumed the shelling of residential areas of Avdiivka using high-calibre artillery systems. Several residential buildings were hit and there are several fires around the town. One of the shells exploded close to a temporary heating station that had been set up by the Ukrainian authorities to provide Avdiivka residents with warmth in these freezing temperatures.

Destroying critical infrastructure and thus creating a humanitarian disaster is a terrorist tactic aimed primarily at civilians. This tactic obliterates the Russian propaganda myth of so-called peaceful miners who fight the authorities with their own shotguns. Locals would never do this to their neighbours, but those who have come to Ukrainian soil as aggressors to destroy Ukrainian statehood do not hesitate to damage factories, houses and powerlines. This tactic is not new for the Russian forces.

The aforementioned actions by Russia may qualify as a war crime. Ukraine will add evidence related to the recent escalation and indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure to our claim against Russia on terrorism to the International Court of Justice. This is a first but very important step in bringing Russia to justice for its mounting violations of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The Ukrainian Government announced the emergency situation in Avdiivka. We have managed

to sustain the functioning of the heating system at a minimum level and to avoid the rapid degradation of the situation into a real humanitarian disaster. Eleven warming centres have been set up, scores of field kitchens have been deployed, and kindergartens and hospitals are functioning in emergency mode. Additional police units have been deployed to protect civil order and to help provide a timely response to the emergency.

The events of recent days have become a test for monitoring and coordination mechanisms in Donbas. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Ukraine has repeatedly, literally hundreds of times, requested Russian representatives at the JCCC to use their influence to stop the hostilities. Of the 230 requests made during the period from 29 January to 1 February to stop the hostilities in the area around Avdiivka, all but two were ignored. On 31 January, Ukraine called for an urgent video-teleconference meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) to defuse tensions. Once again, the Russian side and their proxies in Donbas did not show up, claiming that this was not the right time. Seriously? Not the right time?

Despite calls from all corners for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry, the militants continue shelling day and night. On 1 February, despite the appeal of the Trilateral Contact Group for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in the region of Avdiivka, Russian militants did not stop shooting, and even shot at the repair team that was trying to fix the damaged power line. They shelled residential buildings and last night shelled one of the roads designated for the evacuation of civilians. This is nothing less than a war crime.

I have a picture here that I would ask the Council to look at. This is an apartment building in Avdiivka; at least 1,500 people lived there. It was shelled by terrorists, and the inhabitants rushed out into the freezing cold; it was -20°C outside. This is beyond evil. The perpetrators, those who pulled the trigger and those who gave the orders, should face justice, and they will.

It has to be mentioned that when the content of the aforementioned appeal was being discussed in the Trilateral Contact Group, the Russian side was against the formulations regarding repair work on the energy and power-supply infrastructure. This is additional clear evidence of the Kremlin's intention to create a humanitarian catastrophe in Avdiivka, as was done, by the way, by the Russian army in Aleppo not so long ago.

Two Ukrainian soldiers have died and 14 have been wounded over the past 24 hours. Altogether, 20 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 134 wounded by Russian hybrid forces and Russia-backed militants since the beginning of the year. We call on the Russian Federation to abide by the ceasefire and to ensure the necessary secure conditions for the repair work.

The attacks on and near Avdiivka in recent days as well as the continuing Russian aggression underscore two important trends. First, Russia and its proxies in Donbas continue to block and undermine the peaceful process by pursuing their political objectives through the indiscriminate use of force. There can be no illusion about the Russian role in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Every bit of progress made in the TCG or on the contact line is flagrantly destroyed by another assault by Russia-led terrorists.

Secondly, the existing mechanisms created to avoid further destabilization and to move forward with the implementation of the Minsk agreements are not efficient enough to fulfil their mandate. Despite the urgency of the situation, the TCG met only three days after the outbreak of hostilities, and the JCCC appears to be an ineffective tool in a crisis situation — all of this due to Russian non-cooperation. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission observers still face serious restrictions on their freedom of movement on the territories temporary controlled by Russia-backed militants. They lack 24/7 monitoring capabilities and the relevant technical means.

The events around Avdiivka have created an obstacle to Russia's aspiration to resolve the conflict in Donbas by military means. Yes, the Ukrainian army proved its strength and ability to repeal a Russian offensive. However, Ukraine is paying a dramatically high price, losing its best sons and daughters to this war.

We care about our people. The death of every single soldier or civilian is yet another scar on the soul of Ukraine. I ask the Council to look at this picture; it shows a 26-year-old officer, Andriy Kyzylo, who was killed on 29 February near Avdiivka. Look at his eyes, Mr. Ambassador; it is your weapons and your compatriots who killed him.

(*spoke in Russian*)

You killed him.

(*spoke in English*)

Our people get down on their knees to treat their fallen defenders. Russian invaders are buried in unmarked graves. We are seeking peace and are doing our utmost and taking every step to bring peace back to Ukraine. Therefore, we do not advocate a military solution and believe that the available political means should be used. The armed confrontation could be easily ended. The Russian Federation should stop arming militants and sending its mercenaries and military personnel to Ukraine.

Does anyone seriously think that rockets and artillery shells grow on trees in Donbas? We are talking about tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of rounds of artillery ammunition. Since November, we and international observers have noted an increased supply of ammunition and armour to militants from the Russian Federation. Now we are seeing the consequences.

What is clear is that an international security presence on the ground needs to be enhanced so as to prevent such provocations in future and thus contribute to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and, ultimately, to a peaceful resolution. We once again urge the Russian Federation to exercise its responsibility to implement the Minsk commitments, specifically their security and humanitarian provisions. We urge Russia to halt its support for terrorists and to stop building hybrid terrorist armies in eastern Ukraine as well as its military buildup along Ukraine's eastern borders.

Moreover, we call on the Russian Federation not to expand the framework of the escalation. Yesterday Russian military forces shelled and damaged an Antonov An-26 Ukrainian aircraft while it was conducting a flight over the Odessa gas-deposit region in the Black Sea, in Ukraine's exclusive maritime zone. This time only a lucky coincidence saved the crew from the Russian shelling. God only knows what will happen next time.

There is a rather simple remedy that would stop this Russian aggression against my country and prevent further civilian suffering. What the international community needs to do is to step up the pressure on the aggressor and urge the Russian Federation to get out of Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful for today's briefings, which painted a disturbing picture of the ongoing events and suffering of the people of eastern Ukraine.

What has basically been happening is quite obvious. Kyiv is attempting to use clashes it has itself provoked as a pretext for a complete refusal to implement the Minsk agreements, signed on 12 February 2015 and endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015). However hard the Ukrainian side tries to portray things differently, including by convening this meeting of the Council and making statements that turn the facts upside down, there is a massive amount of information, including open admissions by Ukrainian officials right up to the level of the country's President, that is too overwhelming to permit denial of the destructive policies of Kyiv and its armed forces.

On 3 January, Ukraine's Defence Minister Poltorak confirmed that the Ukrainian armed forces had seized new positions in the grey zone, with the demagogic claim that that did not violate the Minsk agreements because the occupied territories thereby belonged to Ukraine. On 17 January, Interior Minister Avakov, speaking to Ukrainian border guards, urged them to prepare to seize the State borders in 2017. On 22 January, President Poroshenko declared publicly that Ukraine would not be doing anything about political reform until it regained full control of its border with Russia, in an approach that completely perverts the content of the Minsk package of measures and deliberately renders them unrealizable, practically speaking. Lastly, yesterday Deputy Defence Minister Pavlovsky completed the picture by bragging to the press that his heroic lads were moving forward where they could, metre by metre, step by step.

That overtly militaristic rhetoric has had very real consequences, as is clearly apparent from the latest reports of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Observers have confirmed that the escalation was provoked by Ukrainian security forces. On the night of 27 and 28 January, the Mission's camera at the Oktyabrskaya mine recorded intense crossfire between the Ukrainian armed forces and militias, which was preceded by firing from the north-west to the south-east, that is, from the security forces' positions. At the same time, another Special Monitoring Mission camera

captured an intense artillery exchange in Avdiivka that began with five shots fired from north to south, which also meant from Ukrainian forces' positions. The next night, 28 and 29 January, a Mission camera in Avdiivka recorded 15 shots fired from a north-westerly direction towards the south-east, also from the Kyiv security forces' side, bombarding the militias' positions. That was followed by hours of fighting in the Avdiivka industrial zone. The picture on the southern flank was the same. According to the Mission camera in Shyrokyne, intense crossfire on the night of 28 January was preceded by 20 shots fired from west to east, that is, again from the Ukrainian forces' positions towards the rebels' territory, after which another battle ensued.

According to Mission data for 26 to 29 January, indiscriminate shelling of residential areas under rebel control, coming from areas where Ukrainian security forces were deployed, injured civilians in Brianka and destroyed more than a dozen houses in Brianka, Donetskyi, Olenivka, Zaichenko, Kalynove, Novooleksandrivka and Pervomaiske. The Mission continued to observe Ukrainian forces' military equipment in the security zone. Between 26 and 29 January observers discovered four tanks in Avdiivka and three howitzers in Mykolaivka, as well as the disappearance from the security forces' storage of 76 tanks, 10 mortars and 18 field guns. Only about 6 per cent of the stored military hardware was actually there.

Thus began a new spiral of tensions that since then has only been ratcheted up further. According to yesterday's Special Monitoring Mission report, the number of violations has risen daily, reaching 10,300 shell explosions in a span of 24 hours. At the same time, the statistics on restrictions to the Mission's access speak for themselves — in seven of nine cases it was the Ukrainian forces that put obstacles in its way. The numbers testify to the fact that, rather than attempting to normalize the situation in the Donbas region and arrive at reasonable compromises within the Normandy format and the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group, the Ukrainian authorities are desperately trying to achieve a military solution to the conflict.

Another attention-grabbing feature is the fact that any serious deterioration of the situation in the Donbas region, amazingly, coincides with foreign visits on the part of Ukraine's leadership. Evidently that is how Kyiv hopes to keep its self-created crisis on the international agenda while at the same time roping in newly elected Heads of Government with its reckless, confrontational policies. But, of course, the Ukrainian leadership needs money, which it hopes to extract from the European Union, various European countries, the United States and the international financial institutions by setting itself up as a victim of aggression.

Kyiv seems not to worry very much about the humanitarian cost of such a policy. It is actively using heavy types of armaments around village residential areas, schools and hospitals, including heavy artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, which according to the Minsk package of measures of 12 February 2015 should have been withdrawn from the contact line long ago. Civilians are among those killed and wounded. Thanks to Ukrainian security forces' attacks, the Donetsk filtration station and the Avdiivka coke plant have been damaged and mineworkers' lives threatened.

In order to prevent a humanitarian disaster and get the situation back on a political track, the international community must be firm and consistent. In that regard, the Security Council sent an important message on 31 January (SC/12700) when it united in calling for an immediate ceasefire and strict respect for the Minsk package. Yesterday the Trilateral Contact Group made an announcement in the same spirit when it called for full compliance with the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of the heavy weaponry that comes under the Minsk agreements. We expect to see effective action from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission aimed at de-escalating the situation as soon as possible. The Normandy format participants, and those who can exert the most influence on Kyiv, have a particular responsibility in that regard. We hope that the forces of common sense in Ukraine itself, as well as those who are interested in resolving such situations by political means, will not allow the situation in south-eastern Ukraine to turn into a worst-case scenario, but will instead focus their attention and efforts on ensuring that the Minsk agreements are fulfilled.

Today President Poroshenko said that he had personally ordered the Ukrainian delegation to convene today's Council meeting. When he called to order today's meeting, the Permanent Representative of Ukraine proposed drafting a Security Council document building on the statement we issued on 31 January. Sadly, the unbridled, odious statement we heard today from Ukraine shows that the Ukrainian delegation here in New York is continuing on the path of war, which is deeply regrettable.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France firmly condemns the resumption of fighting in eastern Ukraine in the past few days, specifically in Avdiivka. We are dealing with the worst upsurge in violence and the highest rate of violations of the ceasefire that we have seen in months. They have been accompanied by a spike in the number of victims, including among civilians, as well as a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation, which we are following closely. We are forced to conclude that neither the security or the humanitarian situation has improved since the consultations we had on the subject two days ago, despite the fact that the Council called unanimously for the immediate restoration of the ceasefire (SC/12700). In that regard, France calls on all the parties to exercise restraint, and supports the appeal of the Trilateral Contact Group for the immediate restoration of the ceasefire in accordance with terms of the Minsk agreements, in particular with respect to the prohibition against the use and withdrawal of heavy weapons. The disengagement of forces on both sides of the line of contact must also be implemented without delay. We expect each of the parties to refrain from any provocation that maight further aggravate the situation. We also call on Russia to use its influence with the separatists.

The work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in support of the ceasefire and de-escalation is essential. We call on all the parties on the ground to ensure the access and security of OSCE observers in Avdiivka, as well as in all areas of the conflict, as established in the mandate of the Mission.

The humanitarian situation is of particular concern to us, as the civilian population is facing extreme weather conditions and a disruption to the supply of water and electricity in several areas, including Avdiivka. We urge the parties to act as quickly as possible to improve the living conditions of the civilian population on the ground. Immediate compliance with windows of calm is essential to enable the repair of critical infrastructure in areas affected by fighting and for the relief of populations. We believe that to be crucial. The current crisis also calls to mind the crucial importance of the ongoing presence of humanitarian agencies throughout Ukrainian territory, including in areas beyond the control of the Government.

Faced with the new resurgence in violence, France recalls that the solution to the crisis in Ukraine cannot be a military one; rather, it must be political. That is why the implementation of the Minsk agreements remains more than ever the only way forward for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. France and Germany remain fully engaged in their diplomatic efforts within the framework of the Normandy format. Although we are aware of the scale of the work that remains to be done and the challenges to be overcome, we are convinced that working in that format, the only one to bring Ukraine and Russia together around the same table at the political level, is necessary and must be continued. In particular, work in the Normandy format has made it possible in recent months to lessen the intensity of the fighting and reduce the number of human casualties on the ground, as well as to implement confidence-building measures in the security and humanitarian spheres, with respect to the re-establishment of the ceasefire, the implementation of areas of disengagement or even the carrying out of exchanges of prisoners.

Despite continued fighting, the number of civilian casualties remains six times lower since the signing of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, according to estimates by United Nations agencies. Our efforts are currently focused on developing a common road map that would enable concomitant progress with respect to the security and political aspects of the Minsk agreements. We can make progress only by moving forward on those two tracks. It is the shared belief of France and Germany that this is now the only way forward and that the European sanctions implemented at the beginning of the crisis are linked to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

For France, a resolution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine is more than ever a major priority. Alongside Germany, we will continue tirelessly in our efforts to mediate within the framework of the Normandy format, for there is currently no viable alternative and because every result on the ground counts. Our goal remains the restoration of Ukrainian control over all of its internationally recognized borders, which, we recall, can take place only via the re-establishment of its authority over Crimea.

In this challenging environment, everyone must now shoulder their responsibilities and fulfil their commitments. In our view, that is the main message the Council should send, and it is the spirit with which we are prepared to consider any draft presidential statement that may be adopted by the Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Let me take this opportunity to welcome you, Sir, in your role as President of the Security Council for the month of February. I commend you for the start that you have made, and I support your proposal for a draft presidential statement on this important issue.

As our briefersmade clear, Sir, we begin your presidency — sadly — in troubling times for eastern Ukraine. The worrying upsurge in fighting in that part of your country should concern us all. It is claiming yet more lives, both civilian and military. It is aggravating the suffering of those living there, forcing more to flee their homes. There is no end in sight. In cities such as Avdiivka, people talk of an endless salvo of artillery and rockets. They talk of failing electricity and falling temperatures, of burying loved ones in the snow. And those events have not come out of the blue. They are not new. The Council knows all too well the root causes of this violence and instability. This is what happens when Russia disregards the sovereign right of Ukraine to choose its own destiny. This is what happens when Russia undermines the territorial integrity of Ukraine by illegally annexing Crimea. This is what happens when Russian military personnel stand side-by-side with separatists whom they have equipped, armed and trained. And, this is a reality that the Security Council cannot, must not, accept. We need urgent action to bring an end to this upsurge in violence before it spirals out of control.

I want to pay tribute to the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination to bring about a truce to allow crucial repairs. Theose efforts will help to restore vital utilities and to allow for the evacuation of civilians. I urge all parties to support those efforts and to facilitate access to the area for humanitarian actors.

But such actions are just a band-aid on a bullet wound. For any fragile short-term truce to become a comprehensive and sustained cease-fire, all parties most show restraint. That means in particular ending the extensive use of high-caliber indiscriminate weapons, such as Grad rocket systems. The use of those weapons, from and against civilian areas, is not only in disregard of the Minsk agreement; it is also an abhorrent rejection of the norms of conflict. They must be withdrawn from the line of contact, as stipulated in the Minsk agreements.

We also need to tackle the underlying causes of the fighting. It is clear that any solution to the Ukraine crisis must be political, not military, as we all recognized in resolution 2202 (2015). The Minsk agreements are the only meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine. Let us therefore urge all sides to recommit to meeting their full obligations under the Minsk agreements. We support the continued efforts of France and Germany within the Normandy format towards securing full implementation, and we are extremely grateful for the enormous investment that they have made in the process to date.

Let me conclude with this final thought. We frequently hear from the Russian Government — as we did today — that all the problems in eastern Ukraine are the consequences of actions by the Ukrainian Government. That is simply not the case; it is an inversion of reality. The responsibility for the inception and continuation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine lies squarely with Russia and the separatists it supports. As the British Prime Minister made clear in Washington, D.C., last week, the United Kingdom will continue to stand by Ukraine in full support of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Most recently, the international community — through the General Assembly resolution on the situation in Crimea in December — sent the same clear message to Russia. And earlier this week, the entire Security Council, including Russia, expressed the very same thing in an agreed statement (SC/12700): that we support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine

But Russian words are not the same as Russian deeds. We need to see Russia comply with its Minsk commitments. We need to see Russia stop equipping and arming the separatists and, instead, use its influence to make sure the separatists meet their Minsk obligations. And we need to see Russia withdrawing its force from all of Ukraine. That includes Crimea, the illegal annexation of which we do not, and will not, recognize. Sanctions against Russia cannot be lifted until that happens. It is for the people for Ukraine to decide their country's future. Ukraine must be allowed to make its own sovereign decisions.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Ambassador Apakan for their useful and comprehensive briefings today.

This is my first appearance in the Chamber as the Permanent Representative of the United States. It is an immense honour for me to sit behind the United States placard and to follow in the footsteps of so many giants of American diplomacy. It is humbling to be part of a body whose responsibility is nothing less than maintaining international peace and security. I look forward to working closely with all Council members. The United States is determined to push for action. There is no time to waste.

I consider it unfortunate that the occasion of my first appearance here is one in which I must condemn the aggressive actions of Russia. It is unfortunate because it is a replay of far too many instances over many years in which United States representatives have needed to do that. It should not have to be that way. We do want to better our relations with Russia. However, the dire situation in eastern Ukraine is one that demands clear and strong condemnation of Russian actions. The sudden increase in fighting in eastern Ukraine has trapped thousands of civilians and destroyed vital infrastructure. And the crisis is spreading, endangering many thousands more. The escalation of violence must stop.

The United States stands with the people of Ukraine, who have suffered for nearly three years under Russian occupation and military intervention. Until Russia and the separatists it supports respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the crisis will continue.

Eastern Ukraine, of course, is not the only part of the country suffering because of Russia's aggressive actions. The United States continues to condemn and call for an immediate end to the Russian occupation of Crimea. Crimea is a part of Ukraine. Our Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

The basic principle of the United Nations is that States should live side by side in peace. There is a clear path to restoring peace in eastern Ukraine — the full and immediate implementation of the Minsk agreements, which the United States continues to support. For the people in eastern Ukraine, the stakes are high. With each passing day, more people are at risk of freezing to death or dying from a mortar blast.

The United States calls on Russia and the combined Russian-backed separatist forces to fulfil their commitments in the Minsk agreements and fully restore and respect the ceasefire. The Minsk agreements require the disengagement of forces and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from both sides of the contact line. That is the formula for a sustainable ceasefire. Pulling back forces and taking heavy weapons out of the area will save lives. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission must also be granted full, unfettered access. The presence of OSCE monitors can help calm tensions.

Cooperation on this issue is possible. Earlier this week, both Russia and Ukraine supported this Council's unanimous call (SC/12700) to return to a ceasefire. It was the first time in years that the Council was able to come together on Ukraine. The parties on the ground should heed that signal and hold their fire. The United States expects that those who can influence the groups that are fighting — in particular Russia — will do everything possible to support an end to the escalation of violence.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman; Ambassador Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their briefings.

China has been following the situation in eastern Ukraine closely, and is concerned about the recurring hostilities that have resulted in civilian casualties. We have taken note of the fact that the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk held consultations on the implementation of the Minsk agreements and promoting a peaceful resolution to the Ukranian issue. We call on the parties to the conflict to strictly abide by the ceasefire regime and remain committed to a political solution. There must be a fundamental and long-term solution to this conflict that will both accommodate the legitimate rights and aspirations of all regions and ethnic groups and address the reasonable concerns of all the parties concerned, in order to strike a balance among the interests of all sides.

China is of the view that all parties should fully implement resolution 2202 (2015), enforce the cessation of hostilities and violence and implement the Minsk agreements. They must remain committed to seeking a comprehensive, lasting and balanced solution to the Ukranian issue through dialogue and consultation, so as to help achieve peace, stability and development in Ukraine, harmonious relations among all ethnic groups and peaceful coexistence between Ukraine and

countries of the region. The international community should continue to support every diplomatic effort for a political solution. Council discussions on the issue should contribute to the easing of tensions on the ground and a proper solution to the Ukranian question.

Mr. Thõresson (Sweden): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Ambassador Apakan and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their very useful briefings.

As today's briefings have reminded us, the conflict in Donbas has now been ongoing for almost three years. Each day that it continues to simmer without a solution results in more deaths and injuries, as well as fear and uncertainty for civilians. The humanitarian fallout of the current deterioration in the region is particularly alarming. Access to basic needs, including water, electricity and heating, has been interrupted. Sixteen thousand people are acutely affected, with reports of 2,000 children in need of assistance in Avdiivka.

We call on all parties to ensure that civilians are protected in line with international humanitarian law. Humanitarian actors must have access to the entirety of the Ukranian territory, including the zones outside the control of the Ukranian Government. The recent escalation in violence is a clear breach of the first point of the Minsk agreements, which call for an immediate and full ceasefire. A cessation of hostilities is essential for security, which, in turn, is a basic prerequisite for finding a sustainable political solution to the conflict. In that regard, we fully support the efforts of the Organizaion for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the difficult work of its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Safe, full and unhindered access for its monitors must be guaranteed.

As a small country committed to a rules-based international order, Sweden relies upon strict adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and respect for international law. Violation of those core principles and commitments poses a threat to the European security order, and are therefore a fundamental concern for all of us.

Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected, as underlined by all of us in the Security Council press statement of 31 January (SC/12700). Let us not lose sight of who is the aggressor and who is the victim in this conflict. We highlight Russia's particular responsibility in that regard, and stress that Russia can bring its influence to bear to end the violence, should it wish to do so. In that connection, we should not forget Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sebastopol, in clear violation of international law, including the rules and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In line with consistent appeals from the European Union, Sweden calls for an immediate and lasting ceasefire. We reiterate our call for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Sanctions against Russia must remain in place until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented. We commend and support the efforts of France and Germany in the Normandy format. Finally, we call for the rules and principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, to be fully respected.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien and Ambassador Apakan for their detailed briefings. What we heard from them has reinforced our deep concerns about the escalation of tensions in Donbas over the past few days. That is why we urge all the parties involved to immediately end the intense fighting that erupted around Avdiivka, which involved the use of heavy weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements and inflicted suffering on the civilian population. We urge them to agree on concrete and immediate steps to reverse the deterioration of the security situation. That includes a return to the ceasefire without delay, to which they have repeatedly committed, as well as to proceed with disengagement in the areas specifically identified in September and to withdraw heavy weaponry in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Secondly, we are seriously concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the area. In the current harsh winter conditions, with freezing temperatures, thousands of lives are at risk on both sides of the contact line because of the destruction of the local power and water filtration plants. Every action required to restore full access to water, electricity and heating should be put in place without delay to prevent further suffering. We therefore call upon all the parties to allow the urgent repair of critical infrastructure and to grant safe, full, unrestricted access to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission and to humanitarian organizations. The protection of the civilian population must remain the highest priority for all sides. In that regard, my country promptly responded to the humanitarian call

with a contribution of €1 million to the World Food Programme and UNICEF programmes on food security and mine-risk education in conflict-afflicted areas.

Thirdly, the blatant violation of the ceasefire we are witnessing is not acceptable. The latest developments represent a serious violation of the Minsk agreements. We firmly believe that their implementation is the only path to a political solution to the crisis. In that regard, Italy reiterates its full support of the role played by the Normandy group and the OSCE in facilitating dialogue. We deem it to be necessary to relaunch negotiations without delay and expect a constructive commitment with tangible results to be made with the Trilateral Contact Group. I would like to take this opportunity to recall Italy's well-known position in support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that dialogue and political will must prevail over a military solution. All parties are encouraged to fully honour their commitments in order to achieve an inclusive and sustainable solution to the crisis in Ukraine.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank the briefers for providing us with a vivid update on the situation on the ground. Japan is deeply concerned about the situation in eastern Ukraine and its severe impact on the local civilian population. We are disappointed that, as we have just heard, the ceasefire is not being observed on the ground, even as we speak.

Japan strongly calls for an immediate return to the ceasefire regime, as expressed in the Security Council press statement (SC/12700) issued on 31 January. Japan takes note of the statement of the Trilateral Contact Group yesterday calling for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the contact line and the provision of unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population. The full and prompt implementation of those measures is critical in order to alleviate the suffering of the population and to prevent a further escalation of the situation. Japan calls for all the parties to act swiftly and in good faith.

Japan strongly believes that the situation in Ukraine can be solved only by diplomatic means and in full respect for international law, especially the legal obligation to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements is the only way forward.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan is gravely concerned about the dangerously deteriorating situation in eastern Ukraine and its severe impact on the local civilian population, which results in death and injuries and many humanitarian problems. We extend our sincere and deep condolences following the civilian casualties, which we consider to be unacceptable. We express our appreciation to Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien and to Ambassador Apakan for their updates, as well as their efforts to resolve the crisis.

My delegation would like to refer to some key points. We are very much interested in the stability of Ukraine, taking into account all that has transpired and the current situation on the ground. We express sincere concerns about the fate of young people, women and all vulnerable groups in the crisis zone, as well as the effect on future generations. Last March, my President, who contributed to the launch of the Normandy format, mentioned at the Nuclear Security Summit that was held in Washington, D.C., that bringing an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine should be of utmost common priority. Conflicts should be resolved through negotiations.

Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that there is no alternative to resolving the crisis in Ukraine other than through peaceful means based on the observance by all participants of their obligations, in accordance with the norms and values of international law and key principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore call for strict compliance with resolution 2202 (2015), on the Minsk agreements.

Kazakhstan fully endorses the activities of the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups on implementing confidence-building measures in the four areas they cover. We welcome the results of the Contact Group meeting held in Minsk on 1 February. We also believe that any further escalation of tensions should be prevented in order to avoid a worsening of the situation. Any aggravation of the current circumstances could have unpredictable consequences both regionally and globally. We call upon the parties to withdraw their heavy weapons from the contact line. We stand ready to assist the population, support international mediation efforts and facilitate the negotiation process among all the parties and their leaders, with a view to resolving this situation as soon as possible.

Kazakhstan continues to provide both bilateral and multilateral aid. All parties must follow their obligations

to provide free access to humanitarian assistance in the conflict zone. We believe that the full-fledged normalization of the country's situation can be achieved only with the economic recovery of Ukraine, which should be our primary and requisite consideration. We therefore call for economic confidence-building measures to be established. Kazakhstan intends to work in a balanced and unbiased manner, on an equal basis, with all Security Council members to promote compromise and consensus in order to help achieve an early solution to the crisis, keeping in mind the paramount importance of maintaining and strengthening peace and security. We call upon all parties to demonstrate wisdom, responsibility and political will to ensure an immediate return to a ceasefire regime.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, Sir, since your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, I would like to warmly congratulate you and to wish you every success. Rest assured of the full support of the Senegalese delegation. I would also like to commend the skill, efficiency and the transparent manner in which the Swedish delegation guided the work of the Council last month.

I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's briefing with Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador Apakan and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien, whose updates are key to our discussions.

Two years after the signing of the Minsk agreement and the adoption of resolution 2202 (2015) by the Security Council, by which the former was endorsed, the situation in eastern Ukraine is still tense and has suddenly worsened now that armed clashes have resumed. The resurgence in hostilities has resulted in a heavy death toll, left many wounded and exacerbated the region's dire humanitarian situation. As others have mentioned, the fighting has disrupted electricity, water and heating for thousands, at this time of year when temperatures drop to as low as -20°C during the night. This alarming picture leads me to urge the protagonists to think about the civilians and immediately cease hostilities, respect the ceasefire and withdraw heavy weapons.

I would like to commend the reiterated call by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, which met yesterday in an emergency meeting, for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front lines and access for the observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and for humanitarian assistance to affected areas are all crucial.

In conclusion, I want to call for an intensification of diplomatic efforts, in particular through the Normandy format, by which France and Germany seek to support Russia and Ukraine in fully implementing the Minsk agreements for the good of the civilian population.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien, as well as the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Apakan, for their briefings on the most recent developments in eastern Ukraine.

The deteriorating security situation in the region and the use of weapons prohibited by the Minsk agreements is a matter of concern. We also note the consequences of the most recent violence in terms of civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure. The humanitarian situation requires an urgent response.

We believe there is a need to do everything possible to de-escalate the situation. In that regard, we fully support the call made by the Security Council two days ago (SC/12700) for an immediate regurn to a ceasefire regime. No doubt, a resolution of the situation in the eastern region of Ukraine can be achieved only through a peaceful settlement. That is why it is absolutely imperative that the parties remain fully committed to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and strictly adhere to resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia takes note of what we have heard in the briefings by Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

We express our concern about the resurgence of tension in Donbas. We deplore in particular the

non-compliance with the ban on the use of heavy artillery, given the urgent need to maintain the ceasefire. In that regard, we approve of the Council's press statement SC/12700, of 31 January, which condemns the use of weapons banned by the Minsk agreements and calls for full compliance with resolution 2202 (2015). Bolivia calls upon the parties to respect the provisions of the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015), which is essential to strengthen the efforts the parties must make in the search for a peaceful and political solution to the crisis.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of the crisis on the civilian population. We therefore urge the parties to strictly adhere to their obligations in terms of protecting civilians, including the need to guarantee access to humanitarian assistance and basic medical services. With the support of the international community, full compliance with the Minsk agreements and the joint efforts of the Security Council it should be possible in the short term to avoid a military escalation and to reach a peaceful solution to this crisis with a view to preventive diplomacy, which the Secretary-General has called for. Every possible effort must be made to achieve lasting peace, which in the long term will be beneficial not only for the parties but also for the region and the entire world. We also call for the parties to not step up the rhetoric, for we do not think it will contribute to a political solution to this very difficult situation.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is grateful for the detailed briefings by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien, as well as by Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan.

Uruguay continues to follow with great concern the recent developments in Avdiivka and the recent violations of the ceasefire. Uruguay thinks it is crucial to step up efforts and dialogue to ensure the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements, as they constitute the right way to achieve a political and peaceful solution to this conflict. Along those lines, Uruguay calls on the parties to ensure the effective protection of human rights of the residents of all regions, in particular of the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk.

At the same time, it is also crucial for the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law in all circumstances. This is critical to addressing the situation of internally displaced persons and people requiring humanitarian assistance, in particular in terms of protection and given the current weather conditions, the continuous supply of water, food, energy and heat, emergency shelter and other critical services in temperatures that drop to -20°C

Uruguay recognizes the important work being carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and believes that it is vital for the Mission to be allowed access to all conflict areas in order to end to fulfil its mandate. We urge a resumption of the spirit with which the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015). The parties must comply with their obligatioons in that regard.

In conclusion, Uruguay hopes that the challenges in implementing the Minsk agreements can be overcome and that the disputes can be settled exclusively through peaceful means, dialogue between the parties and with full respect for international law and democratic values.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to join those who have spoken before me in thanking you, Mr. President, as well as Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their briefings to the Security Council on the worsening of the situation in the Donbas region.

Egypt expresses its serious concern about the continuation of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, and especially with regard to the supplies of electricity, water and heat, which have been cut off and which affect a great number of civilians in very difficult weather conditions in Ukraine. Egypt calls upon all the parties to respect an immediate cessation of hostilities and to fully implement the ceasefire and prevent any provocation that could create further stress.

Furthermore, we must guarantee full access for humanitarian assistance to the entire region affected by the conflict with a view to improving the living conditions of the citizens, above all in the light of the worsening of the humanitarian situation in the region. In that context, Egypt welcomes the agreement expressed by the Council on press statement SC/12700, which was issued on 31 January.

Egypt believes that we should seek a peaceful solution to the conflict in keeping with international commitments. We support the Minsk agreements and believe that they are the appropriate framework for dealing with this crisis, which must be resolved

in the context of the region, through mediation efforts among the stakeholders and with respect and appreciation for both parties to the conflict and the entire international community. That is essential if we are to reach the ultimate goal of a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine and to achieve peace and stability in the country and a lasting settlement of the conflict in the region.

Egypt also urges full compliance with resolution 2202 (2015) and calls on all the parties involved to implement the Minsk agreements' package of measures and procedures, particularly observance of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the institution of essential constitutional reforms and the holding of elections in the Donbas region. Those should be accompanied by a settlement of the military crisis brought on by the conflict in coordination with all the parties, without exception.

Egypt reaffirms its confidence in the various formats for peaceful negotiations between the two parties. We urge those parties to redouble their efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the crisis that can fulfil the people's aspirations within a framework of international legitimacy, to show restraint and to avoid any military escalation. We reiterate our firm support for all efforts designed to achieve a political solution to the crisis, including those in the Normandy format.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our meeting is drawing to a close, and I am now perhaps within my rights, as dean of the Security Council, to welcome our new United States colleagues, Ambassador Nikki Haley. From time to time we may have differences on particular issues, but her efforts will greatly influence the Council's ability to effectively carry out its collective functions as the body with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. I would therefore like to wish her every success.

As for statements, Ambassador Haley touched on the issue of Crimea. In that connection, I would like to remind her that it was the United States Constitution that proclaimed those marvellous historic words: "We the people". The people of Crimea clearly expressed their will in a referendum in which 96 per cent of the population voted for reunification with Russia, from which Crimea had been unjustly and unlawfully severed. And, by the way, that expression of the people's will has subsequently been confirmed in a number of public opinion surveys conducted by Western organizations.

Still on the issue of Crimea, however, it is the representative of the United Kingdom, an aggressive ex-czar, who for some reason persists in saying that the crisis in Ukraine began with Crimea. I am compelled yet again to recall that the whole thing began with a coup that owed a great deal to external support. Here is my advice to the representative of the United Kingdom about his position. Give back the Malvinas, give back Gibraltar, give back the part of Cyprus that was annexed, give back the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean, which has been turned into a huge military base. Perhaps then his conscience will be a little cleaner and he will be able to speak to other topics.

While we sometimes have to deal in controversy, I believe nonetheless that our job as diplomats in the Security Council is to adopt resolutions and see to it that they are strictly implemented. Ten days from now we will observe the second anniversary of the adoption of the Minsk package of measures and the corresponding agreements, while 17 February is the second anniversary of the Council's adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), giving the Minsk agreements international legal status. From time to time, we hear that Russia is not fulfilling the Minsk agreements, but the President of Ukraine says that the military provisions of the Minsk agreements must be complied with before the political ones are dealt with. It is not hard to figure out who is right and who is wrong here. All we have to do is look at a Security Council document — the same resolution 2202 (2015), to which the package of measures is attached as annex I. It contains some very simple propositions that we can all understand.

Regarding the relationship between military and political measures, paragraph 9 of the annex provides for

> "Reinstatement of full control over the State border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict area, starting on day 1 after the local elections and ending after the comprehensive political settlement — provided that paragraph 11 has been implemented in consultation with and upon agreement by representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group."

That means that certain military steps should start only after various political measures have been implemented. Now, what are those conditions in paragraph 11 that have to be implemented? Paragraph 11 provides for

> "Carrying out constitutional reform in Ukraine with a new constitution ... providing for decentralization as a key element ... as well as adopting permanent legislation on the special status of certain areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in line with measures as set out in the footnote".

And the footnote clearly sets out the eight measures that must be taken in order to ensure special status for south-eastern Ukraine. They are extremely precise. The President of France, who made a very active and substantive contribution, and the Chancellor and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, who made a number of proposals that were then agreed to by everyone, did not spend 17 hours drafting them in vain.

There can simply be no arguing here. And, logically, who could suggest or expect that Donetsk and Luhansk should close off their borders and allow themselves to be walled in? And then what? Throw themselves on the mercy of the Kyiv authorities? Can the citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk trust the Kyiv authorities? At one point — I believe it was 1 July 2016 — President Poroshenko appeared on Ukrainian television and said that the citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk were to believed in Kyiv that there would be no heavy-artillery shelling of residential areas during their anti-terrorism operations. He said that his valiant warriors had other ways of recovering those territories and that they would not be shelling residential areas with heavy weapons.

Since then, Mr. Ajuhuri can confirm that not a single day has passed when residential areas have not been shelled largely, while high-rise buildings are fired on one day and then fired on again the next. Take the photograph that Ambassador Yelchenko showed us today. It is a picture of a ruined building in Svitlodarsk. Of course it is terrible. But the soldiers brought similar photos of other areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as well, do you like. Why did he not do that?

Now, of course, Ukrainian soldiers have died in the fighting, and there is nothing good about that. But most of those who have died on the Donetsk and Luhansk sides have been civilians, including women and children. Why not talk about them? Of course we understand your discomfort, but if we are serious people representing serious Governments, especially the Governments that have been directly involved in the process, by the way, let me point out to dear Ambassador Haley that we know how they respect the American authorities in Kyiv, which means that in this regard the American authorities can have some very serious influence on the developing situation. All that is needed is to call for the implementation of the relatively simple provisions in the Minsk package in order to restore Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And yet Kyiv's actions are in fact bringing about the destruction of its territorial integrity. Ambassador Yelchenko says that the local people cannot do this, cannot wreak such destruction, and so forth. But can the local Ukrainians on the Ukrainian side wreak such destruction on Donetsk and Luhansk? It seems that they can. Do they not consider these Ukrainian citizens their brothers? While that would be very sad, we know that that is exactly what some hotheads in Kyiv think and believe.

I would like to appeal to the common-sense section of the Ukrainian political spectrum. But I repeat that, needless to say, without major influence from those on the external factor side, the Normandy format and others, some of this will succeed. Because they will simply deceive their own people with unsubstantiated claims that own population that Kyiv has somehow complied with the Minsk agreements. They say that they are recapturing their country, metre by metre, kilometre by kilometre, and they will have to do so [illegible] metre by metre from Svitlodarsk to the Ukrainian border? How many Ukrainian soldiers and civilians will have to die? And this at a time when a political alternative exists, proposed to at the highest level, and including President Poroshenko's participation [illegible]. While it is therefore regrettable that what we heard today from the Ukrainian delegation was totally irresponsible, I hope that our frank discussion will still enable those who really want to resolve the Ukrainian crisis to look at things more objectively and push Kyiv into taking the steps that are essential to establishing peace in Ukraine. It would certainly be a tragedy if the situation we have faced in the past two or three years should drag on any longer.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): [illegible]

[illegible]

far as the second statement is concerned, I do not even wish to comment on that cocktail of demagogy.

I wish to stress that such frivolous interpretations of the reports of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are more than ridiculous. There is no reference to Ukrainian forces in OSCE reports; that is a known fact. I would rather trust the assessment of Ambassador Apakan, who is with us today.

The Russian Ambassador asserted that the coal factory in Avdiivka was shelled by Ukrainian forces. I have to clarify once again that this factory is located on territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government, so the shells that rained down on the factory were propelled by Russian guns. This was reported by all news bureaus.

Russia blames President Poroshenko and other high Ukrainian officials for coming up the violence around Avdiivka. However, it is not Poroshenko who is supplying the terrorists with ammunition and armour. Indeed, one of them, captured during the recent attack on Avdiivka, already confessed, just yesterday, that the Russian officers commanding his unit had given orders to capture the town before the end of last week. This is all documented.

The reality is very simple. It is Russian weapons that are killing Ukrainians. It is Russian soldiers and mercenaries who have come to Ukraine to earn money for murder. Recalling my remarks about the resumption of shelling in Avdiivka almost an hour ago, I would like to inform my colleagues that, as a result, at least two civilians were killed and another injured. The shelling continues to batter residential areas even as we speak, including the school building used for the distribution of humanitarian supplies.

Thus, we do not exclude any escalations or provocations in and around Donetsk, in further attempts to discredit the Ukrainian armed forces and the Ukrainian leadership. We have information about the evacuation of civilians in Donetsk that we believe to be a preparation for a possible provocation similar to what happened in August 2008, when Russia prepared to attack Georgia.

As I stated at the beginning of the meeting, we expected a serious, professional dialogue that would put an end to the violence and help to avert a humanitarian disaster and save lives. Denying reality is not the way to achieve this. It seems that Russia is living in a parallel reality created by current Russian propaganda, a parallel reality that becomes even more twisted when Ambassador Churkin starts to talk about Crimea.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7877

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7877th meeting
Tuesday, 7 February 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Piagetti
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Cisse
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermudez

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2017/97)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a consolidated corrigendum.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2017/97)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/97, which contains the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I thank you for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2017/97).

This report was prepared with the input of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and in close collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) and other relevant United Nations actors and international organizations.

The report stresses that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is on the defensive militarily in several regions, but although its income and the territory under its control are shrinking, ISIL still appears to have sufficient funds to continue fighting. The group relies mainly on income from extortion and hydrocarbon exploitation, even though resources from the latter are on the decline. Member States are concerned that ISIL will try to expand other sources of income, such as kidnapping for ransom, and increase its reliance on donations.

ISIL is adapting in several ways to military pressure, resorting to increasingly covert communication and recruitment methods, including by using the dark web, encryption and messengers. Moreover, it has expanded its area of attacks to countries neighbouring Iraq and Syria, while continuing to encourage followers further afield to perpetrate attacks. Meanwhile, foreign terrorist fighters leaving Iraq and Syria augment the threat of terrorism in their countries of origin.

The previous reports to the Security Council on ISIL's global threat have focused on South-East Asia, Yemen and East Africa, Libya and Afghanistan. This fourth report focuses on Europe, North Africa and West Africa.

First, since declaring in 2014 its intent to attack Europe, ISIL has conducted a range of attacks in that region. Some of those attacks were directed and facilitated by ISIL personnel, while others were enabled by ISIL providing guidance or assistance or were inspired through its propaganda.

Secondly, while the military offensive in Libya has dislodged ISIL from its stronghold in Sirte, the group's threat to Libya and neighbouring countries exists. Its fighters — estimated to range from several hundred to 2,000 — have moved to other parts of the country.

Thirdly, ISIL has increased its presence in West Africa and the Maghreb, although the group does not control significant amounts of territory in the region. The reported loyalty pledge to ISIL by a splinter faction of Al-Mourabitoun, led by Lebdeh Abdel Wahid Ould Mohamed Lemine, will likely elevate the level of the threat.

Fourthly, ISIL affiliates have been attempting to spread its influence and commit terrorist acts beyond Nigeria and remain a serious threat, with several thousand fighters at its disposal. It is also plagued by financial difficulties and an internal power struggle, and has split into two factions. The Secretary-General also notes some of the measures taken by Member States

through the Security Council and the General Assembly since the last report.

On international cooperation and information-sharing, the report highlights resolution 2322 (2016), which calls upon Member States to consider establishing laws and mechanisms to allow for the broadest possible international cooperation in the judicial and law-enforcement spheres. The report also notes the General Assembly consensus resolution 71/19, of 21 November, aimed at further enhancing and strengthening collaboration between INTERPOL and the United Nations. INTERPOL reports that information-sharing among Member States has since increased.

The report also mentions resolution 2331 (2016), which recognizes the connection between human trafficking, sexual violence and terrorism and other transnational organized criminal activities and calls upon Member States to prosecute and penalize perpetrators. Some States, with help from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), have instituted special procedures to screen for trafficking victims among refugees and asylum-seekers.

The report highlights some of the actions Member States have taken in Europe, the Maghreb and West Africa to counter ISIL. With regard to Europe, for example, it stresses the improvements in States' information-sharing and cooperation on addressing terrorist attacks and on curtailing the travel and transit of foreign terrorist fighters. Although more work needs to be done, including on the use of advance passenger information systems, the report notes that substantial progress has been made to counter the financing of terrorism despite continuing challenges.

The report also notes the efforts by the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to prevent and counter violent extremism, including projects to bring together information on radicalization and intervention and raise awareness about the phenomenon.

With regard to the Maghreb and West Africa, the report notes that States are pooling resources regionally to combat terrorism, while improving the sharing of information on foreign terrorist fighters. It also highlights the fact that some States — with United Nations support — are developing and implementing counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism strategies. Some West African States are taking action on countering the financing of terrorism, including through legislation, although the report notes that few terrorist-financing cases have been prosecuted.

During the reporting period, a number of United Nations entities took further steps to support the efforts of Member States to counter the threat of ISIL. For instance, the CTITF Office and CTED are currently reviewing the Security Council-mandated All-of-UN capacity building implementation plan to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, in order to adjust it to the changing phenomenon. The 37 project proposals address the entire life-cycle of the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, including radicalization, travel, financing, and return and rehabilitation and reintegration should they return. The plan is currently 23 per cent funded.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre provides capacity-building assistance to Member States through a number of projects at the global, regional and national levels.

At the global level, progress was made on the border security initiative, the development of the border security and management programme and the advance passenger information project.

At the regional level, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre continued to provide assistance on the development of strategies to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. The Centre also continued its efforts to improve the capacity of Member States in East and West Africa to address kidnapping-for-ransom, which is a potential source of funds for ISIL-affiliated groups.

At the regional and national levels, the Integrated Assistance for Counter Terrorism (I-ACT) initiative aims to develop a coherent and coordinated capacity-building programme to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. During the reporting period, much progress was made in the implementation of the I-ACT, both in Mali, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and regionally, in the preparation of an I-ACT for the Group of Five States for the Sahel, as mandated by presidential statement S/PRST/2013/26, on peace and security in Africa. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre also continued its preparations for a project to enhance aviation security in Nigeria.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published the *Handbook on the Management of Violent*

Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons. UNODC also continued to provide assistance to Member States in the Middle East and North Africa region aimed at strengthening law-enforcement capacity at international airports, as part of its airport communication project. UNODC and CTED collaborated to provide technical assistance to Member States on strengthening judicial cooperation on foreign terrorist fighters and held technical consultations with Nigeria on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with terrorist organizations. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute implemented projects in the Maghreb on preventing and managing violent extremism, including in prison settings.

The need to develop sustained, coordinated responses to the grave threat posed by ISIL and associated groups and entities is beyond question. There are 19 universal counter-terrorism conventions and protocols, as well as related regional instruments on international terrorism, and relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. But we need to do more, as Member States continue to face significant challenges to ensure effective international cooperation.

Improving our response is critical to addressing the growth of transnational terrorism as ISIL expands its area of attacks and foreign terrorist fighters leave Syria and Iraq. Although many foreign terrorist fighters stay behind in the conflict zone, those returning or leaving the conflict could pose a grave risk to the country of origin or to the countries they are travelling to or transiting through, such as Iraq and Syria's neighbours, as well as countries in the Maghreb.

The Secretary-General has warned that terrorism exacerbates conflicts and that it takes little to trigger a crisis that can engulf a country, or a region, with global consequences. He has urged Member States to step up efforts to resolve conflicts, including those that are responsible for the dramatic increase in global terrorism.

As we consider what more we can do to check and roll back ISIL, we must also step up efforts to prevent and resolve the violent conflicts that both drive and are made worse by terrorism. Those are mutually reinforcing pursuits. Ultimately, it is the spread and consolidation of peace, security, development and human rights that will most effectively deprive terrorism of the oxygen it needs to survive.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my gratitude for the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman on the fourth report (S/2017/97) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering that threat.

The report provides us some encouraging information, although it also gives us serious cause for concern. We are pleased to learn that, following the military defeats suffered by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, which were mentioned in the third report (S/2016/830) of the Secretary-General, that group remains militarily on the defensive in various areas, especially in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. The bad news is that the group is constantly seeking new ways to adapt to the new circumstances and updates its modus operandi, while continuing to poke holes in State and regional security systems.

We are also informed that Da'esh communications and recruitment systems are moving towards more covert methods, such as the so-called dark web, encryption messages and messengers. Furthermore, it carries out attacks using local terrorist cells or by calling on its followers to perpetrate attacks in third countries. All of this points to an organized ability to act with the support of transnational networks, which gives a new dimension to attacks by pseudo lone wolves. Dismantling such terrorist networks will require joint, coordinated efforts that go beyond the work of national authorities, as well as inter-State, regional and international coordination and cooperation. In that regard, we welcome the work done by INTERPOL and regional agencies such as EUROPOL.

As Under-Secretary-General Feltman just said, the fourth report focuses on Europe, the Maghreb and West Africa and tells of the various initiatives and projects being carried out by the United Nations in various areas, as well as by regional organizations and some States. We trust that they will produce good results and we encourage continuing along that path.

We reiterate our belief that cooperation and coordinated actions in various areas and at various levels are needed to combat the different facets of the complex phenomenon of terrorism — its financing,

contact networks and recruitment methods; the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; migration control and the problem of returnees, to cite just a few. However, we also believe that the main responsibility lies with States. That is why we support initiatives to provide technical and financial assistance to countries that lack the necessary means to prevent and combat such a complex and changing phenomenon, especially to the most affected countries. We also call on all States to show genuine political will to combat terrorism and its sources of financing without ambiguity or doublespeak.

We are particularly concerned about the systematic use of sexual violence as a terrorist tactic and about its link to human trafficking. In that regard, we commend the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016) last year. The report also mentions the recruitment of children by terrorist groups and the physical and sexual abuse that some migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women are subjected to. Those practices deserve our strongest condemnation and are issues about which we would like to have further information.

We were moderately pleased by the information on the deterioration of the financial standing of Da'esh, because, despite the deterioration, the group still has enough resources to continue fighting and is calling for new forms of financing in order to increase the number of extortions and kidnappings, in particular through non-profit organizations and fundraising websites.

We are also concerned by the use of improvised explosive devices and the growing use of the Internet and information technologies to spread propaganda, identify potential recruits and incite individuals to commit acts of terrorism. In this second aspect, we encourage greater interaction among public and private actors and we note with satisfaction the joint initiatives of some private companies to develop a database of images intended to promote terrorism.

Before concluding, I must emphasize that we are pleased to know that efforts are also being made to prevent and combat violent extremism and radicalization. Preventing and combating terrorism is the duty of all members of the international community. Although my country belongs to a region where the threat of terrorism is fortunately minor, we are aware that no State is exempt from it. Uruguay believes that it is in everyone's interest that the United Nations be a linchpin among States and international, regional and subregional organizations. Inter-State cooperation and collaboration will make us much more effective in this struggle.

Lastly, I must mention that national counter-terrorism strategies must bear in mind States' obligations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The President: The representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the fourth report (S/2017/97) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts and activities in support of Member States in countering the threat.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia reiterates its emphatic, categorical condemnation of terrorist acts in all their forms and manifestations — regardless of the motives for committing them, where they take place and who their perpetrators may be — since they are a deliberate attack on international peace and security and they represent flagrant violations of international law. At the same time, we wish to stress that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality or civilization.

We recognize the assessments of the reports of the Secretary-General that Da'esh is an unprecedented threat to international peace and security and that it is able to quickly adapt to changing environments and to persuade or inspire terrorist groups that are similar to it throughout the world to facilitate and commit acts of terrorism.

We value the regional focus of the Secretary-General on this occasion, in particular on the regions of Europe, the Maghreb and West Africa. We view with concern the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters returning to their countries of origin in Europe, as well as the online dissemination of designs for improvised explosive devices. While Da'esh has been forced out of cities such as Sirte in Libya, it continues to threaten neighbouring countries in the Maghreb and West Africa. We also note the efforts made by countries of those regions in the context of combating terrorism in

order to respond to the unprecendented threat posed by the so-called Islamic State to regional stability and security. We encourage them to continue making progress and coordinating their efforts in that direction.

We are particularly concerned by the situation of women, girls and boys, asylum-seekers and refugees. The Plurinational State of Bolivia also wishes to publicly recognize the efforts, sacrifices and achievements of the peoples of Iraq, Syria and Libya and all those who are on the frontlines in combating the scourge of terrorism in conflict areas and on the international level, especially with regard to the threat that Da'esh poses to international peace and security. We also recognize the efforts of Turkey, Iran and Russia in reaching a ceasefire agreement on Syria, in December 2016, and the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. Those efforts deal a great blow to the progress of the Islamic State and represent hope in being able to resolve the conflict through negotiations among the parties and the necessary fight against the Islamic State.

While we acknowledge Member States for their contributions set out in the fourth report, Bolivia believes that we must not forget the root causes of the problem of terrorism and the development of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — intervention and regime-change policies. If we do not learn those lessons, we will be condemned to repeat history. We would not be sitting here dealing with this issue, denouncing the situation and the loss of over 1.5 million lives, had it not been for the invasion of Iraq, the attempts to not recognize and overthrow the Government of Syria and the planned destruction of Libya. Furthermore, it is ironic that some Governments responsible for those policies are the very ones that refuse to welcome refugees who are victims of terrorism in the conflict areas.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia once again acknowledges the work done by the United Nations to greatly alleviate the situation of victims of terrorism and to bolster the work of States in fighting this threat to international peace and security.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.